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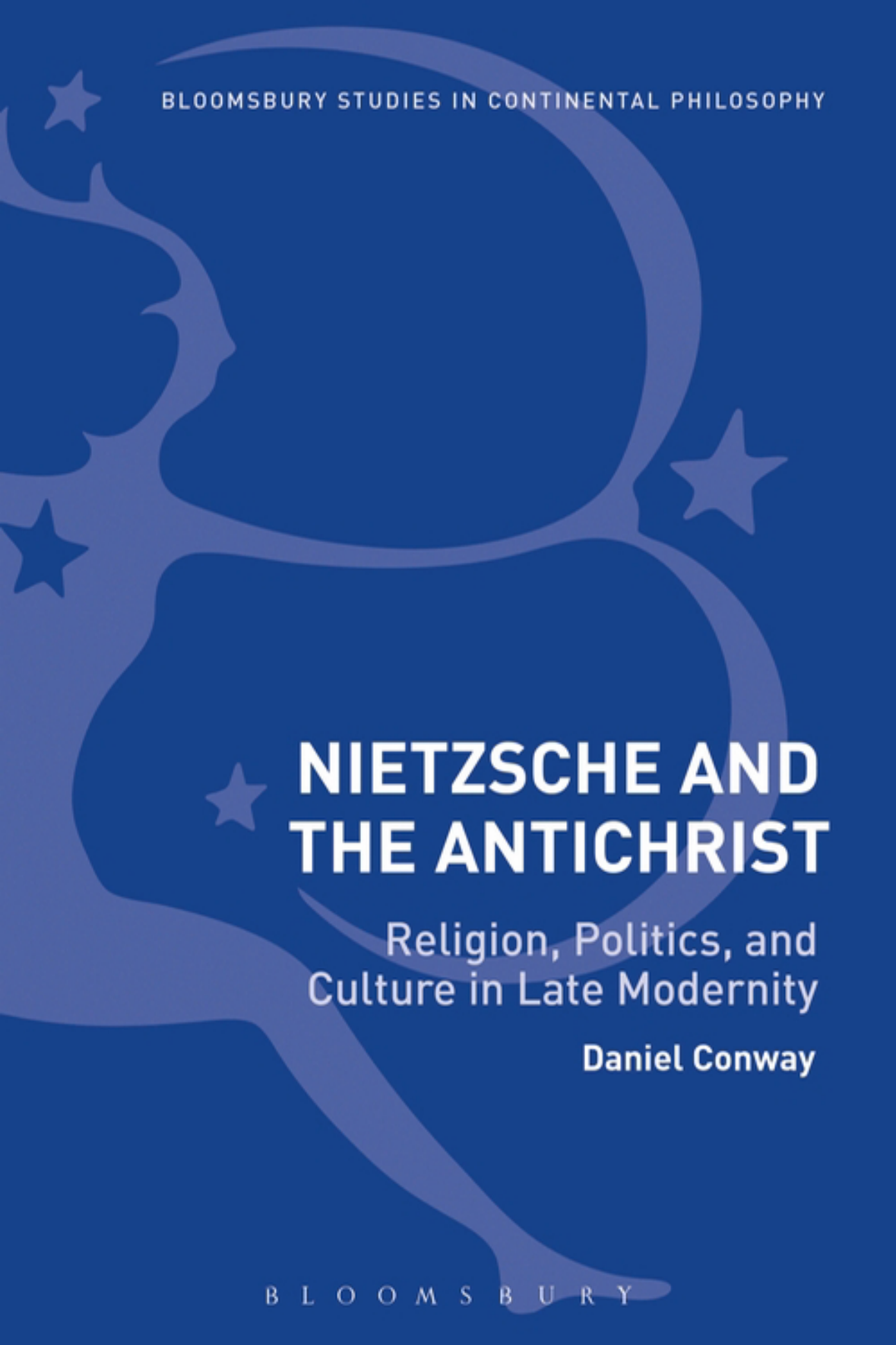

NIETZSCHE AND THE ANTICHRIST

Religion, Politics, and Culture in Late Modernity

Daniel Conway

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Nietzsche and *The Antichrist*

Religion, Politics, and Culture in Late Modernity

Edited by
Daniel Conway

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And time is reckoned from the dies nefastus *with which this calamity began—after the* first *day of Christianity!* Why not rather after its last day? After today? *Revaluation of all values!*

The Antichrist, section 62

The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

Revelation 13, 5-8

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In Memoriam
Thomas J. Conway, MD (1926–2017)

List of Abbreviations

A	*The Antichrist*
AOM	*Assorted Opinions and Maxims*
BGE	*Beyond Good and Evil*
BT	*The Birth of Tragedy*
CW	*The Case of Wagner*
D	*Daybreak/Dawn*
DD	*Dionysian Dithyrambs*
DS	"David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer"
EH	*Ecce Homo*
FEI	"On the Future of Our Educational Institutions"
GM	*On the Genealogy of Morality*
GOA	*Nietzsches Werke (Grossoktavausgabe)*
GS	*The Gay Science*
HH	*Human, All Too Human*
HL	"On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life"
KGB	*Briefwechsel: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*
KGW	*Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*
KSA	*Sämtliche Werke*: *Kritische Studienausgabe*
KSB	*Sämtliche Briefe: Kritische Studienausgabe*
NCW	*Nietzsche Contra Wagner*
PN	*Portable Nietzsche*

PTAG	*Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*
RWB	"Richard Wagner in Bayreuth"
SE	"Schopenhauer as Educator"
TI	*Twilight of the Idols*
TL	"On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense"
UM	*Untimely Meditations*
WP	*The Will to Power*
WS	*The Wanderer and His Shadow*
Z	*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

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Introduction

Daniel Conway

Prior to the publication of *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche described it as "the most independent" book ever presented to humankind (TI "Skirmishes" 51). In his letter of October 4, 1888, to Malwida von Meysenbug, he praised *The Antichrist* as "the greatest philosophical event of all time, with which the history of humankind will be broken into two opposing halves" (KSB 8: 447). Two months later, in a draft of a letter to the Danish critic Georg Brandes, Nietzsche boasted that *The Antichrist* is "actually a judgment on the world [*Weltgericht*]," in part because it delivers a "deathblow" (*Vernichtungsschlag*) to Christianity, whose collapse will create the geopolitical power vacuum he planned to exploit (KSB 8: 500).[1]

Nietzsche's general sense of his accomplishment in *The Antichrist* is conveyed most clearly (and most ominously) in its intended companion book and prelude, *Ecce Homo*.[2] He begins *Ecce Homo* by explaining that it is now incumbent upon him to introduce himself to those who, by all rights, already should know who he is and what he is about:

> Seeing that before long I must confront humanity with the most difficult demand ever made of it, it seems indispensable to me to say *who I am*. (EH P1)

Although he does not identify the grave "demand" (*Forderung*) with which he very soon will confront humankind as a whole, or the "task" (*Aufgabe*) whose eminence outstrips the diminished faculties of his contemporary readers, we may conclude with some confidence that he has in mind the "revaluation of all values" (*Umwerthung aller Werthe*), which his recently completed book by the same name was meant to inaugurate (EH P1).

The book in question, which is known to us as *The Antichrist*, lies completed before him. (It is in fact one of the "gifts" (*Geschenke*) for which he expresses his gratitude in the interleaf epigraph of EH.)[3] Indeed, he most likely has *The Antichrist* in mind when he claims that

> one day my name will be associated with the memory of something tremendous—a crisis without equal on earth, the most profound collision of conscience, a decision that was conjured up against everything that had been believed, demanded, hallowed so far. (EH "Destiny" 1)

As this passage suggests, Nietzsche apparently intended *Ecce Homo* to provide potentially sympathetic readers with a favorable impression of the philosopher who soon would render the terrible "decision" to which he refers.

The production history of these two books further attests to the grandiosity of Nietzsche's expectations for *The Antichrist*. Upon completing the envisioned First Book of *The Revaluation of All Values* on September 30, 1888, he promptly shelved this "explosive" manuscript, turning instead to begin work on the book that would become *Ecce Homo*. While the goal of *Ecce Homo* is, as he says, to introduce himself to potential readers of *The Antichrist*, he attests more candidly in his correspondence from the period to the strategic aim that motivates his efforts to introduce himself. In a letter to Heinrich Köselitz (aka Peter Gast) on October 30, 1888, he confides,

> To be sure, I talk about myself with all possible psychological "cunning" and cheerfulness [*Heiterkeit*]—I do not want to present myself to people as a prophet, savage beast, or moral horror. In this sense, too, the book could be salutary: it will perhaps prevent people from confusing me with my opposite [*Gegensatz*]. (KSB 8: 462)[4]

In particular, as he explains in the Preface to *Ecce Homo*, he wishes to launch a preemptive strike against those who would be inclined to dismiss the author of *The Antichrist* as a "bogeyman" or "moral monster" (EH P2). Although he does not identify the potential critics whom he has in mind, his letter to Köselitz provides the following explanation of the "audacity" on display in *Ecce Homo*:

> Not only did I want to present myself *before* the entirely uncanny solitary act of *revaluation*, I would also like to *test* what risks I can take with the German ideas of freedom of speech. My suspicion is that the first book of the revaluation [i.e., *The Antichrist*] will be confiscated on the spot—legally and in all justice. (KSB 8: 462)[5]

The appearance of *Ecce Homo*, he thus hopes, will "make the question [of revaluation] so intensely serious, and such an object of curiosity" that the relevant authorities will be discouraged from censoring or confiscating *The Antichrist* (KSB 8: 462).[6]

In his correspondence from the autumn of 1888, Nietzsche reveals why he believes he must withhold *The Antichrist* from publication. In a letter to Paul Deussen on November 26, 1888, he writes,

> My life is now reaching its culmination: a couple years more, and the earth will quake from a great lightning stroke. I swear to you that I have the power to alter the *calculation of time*. There is nothing in existence today that will not be toppled; I am more dynamite than human being. My "Revaluation of All Values," with the main title *The Antichrist*, is finished. In the next two years, I have to accomplish having the work translated into seven languages, the *first* edition in each language circa one million copies.[7]

Later that year, in the draft letter to Brandes, Nietzsche confirms his understanding of how, and on whom, *The Antichrist* is supposed to produce its intended effect. Those readers who share in the "aristocratic" sensibilities that (supposedly) join Nietzsche and Brandes will understand that Christianity is now unworthy of their continued allegiance. The best among his contemporaries, including the military officers,[8] will recoil instinctively from Christianity and seek the alternative guidance that he and his fellow "immoralists" will be quick to offer them.[9] Similarly, he expects the Jews among his readers to be intrigued by, and perhaps grateful for, the opportunity to make their home in the post-Christian, philo-Semitic Europe he envisions on their behalf. Here, finally, we learn that his preferred imagery for this supposed contribution to the era of "great politics," typically involving the disposition of artillery, dynamite, and other concussive materiel, is actually meant to suggest a relatively quiet explosion of light and truth. The noise and heat of actual detonations, he believed, would come later.

Inasmuch as he intended *Ecce Homo* as a safeguard against the confiscation of *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche sheds some clarifying light on the relative importance he attaches to these two books. Whereas the value of *Ecce Homo* is largely (though by no means exclusively) instrumental, that is, as a preemptive deflection of the threat of censorship, *The Antichrist* comprises the culmination of his philosophy, namely, in his achievement of what he immodestly calls the "revaluation of all values." *The Antichrist* was to be sufficiently controversial, apparently, that he felt the need to rush *Ecce Homo* into print, as a hedge against the censorship that he believed to be fully warranted. Alas, Nietzsche's clever plan was foiled by his breakdown and collapse in January 1889. *The Antichrist* appeared for the first time in 1895, and *Ecce Homo* was finally published in 1908.

As I have claimed elsewhere (1997: 215–38), Nietzsche clearly intended *The Antichrist* as a singular accomplishment, achievable only by him, and only in the historical period marked by his dawning recognition of the "death of God." Owing to the recent convergence of morality and science—both now take their direction from a potent "will to truth"—Nietzsche believed that a disclosure of the truth of Christian morality would have an immediate and permanent impact on the future development of European history. In light of the unique historical conditions of his enterprise, he believed, a seemingly simple act of truth telling on his part would have the effect of a "hundredfold declaration of war," as he puts it in a letter of October 18, 1888, to Franz Overbeck (KSB 8: 453).

To be sure, Nietzsche's esteem for *The Antichrist* has not been uniformly shared by his readers. The book has received relatively little critical attention, especially in comparison to the scholarship devoted to his more influential writings (e.g., BT, Z, and GM). It is safe to say, in fact, that *The Antichrist* remains something of an outlier, an enigma perhaps, even to Nietzsche's most sympathetic readers. Part of the problem here concerns the grandiose aims of the book itself: Nietzsche is certainly not the first critic of Christian morality to take aim at the warrant for its continued cultural authority. What unique insight or allegation does *The Antichrist* contribute to a growing body of secular and humanistic criticism? If Nietzsche meant for *The Antichrist* simply to herald the coming "day of decision," on which the "revaluation of all values" will take place, then it might be seen to add little to an oeuvre that is already overstocked with promissory notes and prophetic pronouncements (Conway 1988: 178–86). If Nietzsche meant for *The Antichrist* to begin (or even complete) the proposed "revaluation of all values," as he often suggests, it is difficult to see how this might be the case, especially now that a full century has passed since the time of his intended "declaration of war" (Conway 1988: 252–59).

Still, there is much in *The Antichrist* that merits philosophical scrutiny. Nietzsche offers a sophisticated account of how the valorization of pity allows the Christian priests to manipulate and mold their dependent clientele. He develops important and insightful observations on religions other than Christianity, including Judaism, Indian Buddhism, and Islam. Borrowing from Dostoevsky, he develops a fascinating psychological profile of "the Redeemer type," of which he proposes Jesus as exemplary, and he defends this profile as the product of his superior understanding of the limits of Christological interpretation. He also provides welcome support for his controversial

assertion that Paul—the original anti-Christian—falsified the life and death of Jesus for the purpose of gaining his revenge on the peoples and nations of the Roman Empire. Recapitulating the general narrative of the "slave revolt in morality," he provides additional details and background context—including a brief "history of Israel"—in support of his interpretation of the triumph of Christian morality. Confirming his account of the convergence of science and religion in the aftermath of the "death of God," he exposes the Christian priest as the enemy par excellence of science, probity, and truth. Finally, *The Antichrist* offers an important valedictory statement of Nietzsche's understanding of his own philosophical project. Even if we reject his account of the unique historical position that authorizes the claims essayed in *The Antichrist*, a serious study of this book will provide us with a clearer sense of his envisioned contribution to the inception of a new, post-moral epoch in Western history.

The German title of the book—*Der Antichrist*—is ambiguous, and perhaps deliberately so. (For this reason, in fact, several of the contributors to this volume prefer alternative and/or multiple translations of the title.) *Der Antichrist* may designate either the particular individual who will fulfill the eschatological prophecies recorded in the Book of Revelation, or, less sensationally, an impassioned critic of Christian faith and/or practice. While Nietzsche clearly intended the latter meaning, scholars are divided on the question of whether he also meant for his confrontation with Christian morality to invoke the former meaning (Sommer 2013: 19–22). At the very least, or so it would seem, he imagined himself standing in a position of finality vis-à-vis Christianity. One way or the other, he believed, Christianity would not survive his assault on its moral and cultural authority (Conway 1988: 216–25).

This collection of original essays is intended both to reflect and contribute to the recent surge of philosophical interest in Nietzsche and *The Antichrist.* Themes treated in the proposed volume include the following: Nietzsche's attempt to construct historically faithful psychological profiles of Jesus and Paul; Nietzsche's "economic" critique of Christianity, as a religion that beggars the future in order to prop up the ideal of the "good man"; the moral standing of Nietzsche's "immoralism"; Nietzsche's understanding of the philosophical and political opportunities available to him and his fellow "free spirits" in the aftermath of the "death of God"; Nietzsche's analysis and denunciation of the supposed virtue of *pity*; Nietzsche's theory and diagnosis of European decadence; Nietzsche's envisioned contribution to the era of

"great politics"; the prospects for morality and religion in the post-modern, post-moral epoch; the future of European exceptionalism; the relative merits of Buddhism and Islam; Nietzsche's case against the priests and the priestly class; and the convergence of science and morality as complementary expressions of the "will to truth."

Notes

1 Translation by Whitlock in Montinari 2003: 109.
2 In his letter to Brandes on November 20, 1888, Nietzsche describes *Ecce Homo* as the "prelude" (*Vorspi*el) to *The Antichrist* (KSB 8: 482). See also Middleton 1969: 326–27.
3 For an account of Nietzsche's realization that *The Antichrist* would comprise the whole of the *Revaluation of All Values,* see Montinari 2003: 117–18.
4 Translation by Middleton 1969: 318–20.
5 Translation by Middleton 1969: 318–20.
6 Translation by Middleton 1969: 318–20.
7 Translation by Whitlock in Montinari 2003: 109.
8 Nietzsche also refers to his anticipated influence on Prussian officers in BGE 251.
9 A notebook entry bears witness to similar delusions of geopolitical grandeur: "The princes of Europe should consider carefully whether they can do without our support. We immoralists—we are today the only power that needs no allies in order to conquer: thus we are by far the strongest of the strong" (WP 749).

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1

A Revived God in *The Antichrist*? Nietzsche and the Sacralization of Natural Life

Lawrence J. Hatab

In this chapter, I want to draw from *The Antichrist* certain ambiguities in Nietzsche's approach to divinity, such that within his persistent vilification of Christianity lies a gesture toward alternative conceptions of deification that are more consistent with natural existence, and that help illuminate his lifelong interest in the Greek god Dionysus.

Nietzsche's pronouncement of the death of God, particularly in the GS 125 "Madman" passage, is not equivalent to atheism in the strict sense. Unlike common forms of atheism, where religious beliefs are simply rejected as a case of ignorance and error, Nietzsche's naturalism issues a much more subtle and complex posture. Christianity, for example, altered the world and set the stage for most of the Western tradition, which is far too great an effect simply to be deemed a cognitive error. God was a living force in history, and "dying" simply reflects the growing acceptance of secularization in nineteenth-century European thought—the Madman's audience is not religious believers but nonbelievers. Yet, modernity has been too casual in sidelining God—which the Madman calls the "most sacred and most powerful thing the world has possessed" (GS 125)—because a divine ground had been the veridical warrant for most cultural constructs: in morality, politics, philosophy, even science. Sustaining these domains—these "shadows" of God (GS 108)—ignores the crisis of their loss of warrant (GS 343), which comes to the brink of nihilism.

Nietzsche embraces God's demise as an event of unmatched importance (GS 125), but he insists that the loss of foundational truth be embraced as well, because the earth has become "unchained from its sun" (GS 125). Perhaps that is why atheists are included in his brief against the ascetic ideal in GM III, 24—if atheism means the dismissal of religious belief on behalf of rational or

scientific truth.[1] But there is more going on in Nietzsche's challenge to atheism that I want to explore: first, that an honest naturalism must account for how supernatural beliefs would ever take hold in natural life and harbor so much world-forming power; and second, that Nietzsche's texts offer the possibility of a "revived" deity in Nietzsche's embrace of Dionysus as a figural sacralization of natural life, which by force of *amor fati* and eternal recurrence counters the denatured ascetic ideal at the heart of Western thought, and in particular Christian revenge against existence on earth.

1 Nietzsche and atheism

In GM, Nietzsche explores the following question: Assuming that nature is the only reality, how could anti-natural beliefs have arisen at all and register powerful world-changing effects? Unlike normal atheism, it is not enough to diagnose such beliefs as irrational error. Life in some respects must have *needed* such beliefs and their productive power (see GM III, 11–13, 28). The analyses of slave morality and the ascetic ideal address this question by showing how certain human types spawned anti-natural beliefs and practices to ward off suicidal nihilism and find some kind of meaning in natural life. Any critique of anti-natural worldviews, which have shaped so much of Western culture, must acknowledge and understand the life forces involved before any alternative worldview is advanced.

Within Nietzsche's genealogical account, there are important macro-elements that I want to emphasize. In some basic sense, Nietzsche accepts the Darwinian idea that human life and culture emerged out of animal nature. But Nietzsche maintains that being human involves a "sickness," a disease compared to the natural "health" of animals. Indeed, Nietzsche calls mankind "*the* sick animal" (GM III, 13) and the "sickest" animal (A 14). Why? Animals live instinctively and immersed in immediate experience; they exist in time but are free of human anxieties about an uncertain future and memories of past misfortunes—that is, the rich and stressful awareness of times to come and times past. Animals die, but they are not aware of death as a possibility in life at any time. Therefore, animals never worry or get bored; they are "happy" and healthy in their immediacy (see also HL 1). Compared to such animal health, human existence is an *intrinsic* sickness, but it also entails courage (when acting with an awareness of danger) and creativity (in not being bound to present actuality).[2] The point is this: to

be human is to experience life as tribulation, as subject to loss and demise. Consequently, human existence *by nature* is susceptible to anti-natural beliefs, especially religious hopes for salvation. Such beliefs and world-reforming programs (like slave morality) are thus in the service of certain *life* forces to avoid suicidal nihilism. Beyond this diagnostic analysis, however, Nietzsche calls out the paradox of life-averse life forces and calls for the difficult task of affirming natural life despite its intrinsic burdens—because the ascetic "cure" for human sickness is worse than the disease. A significant difficulty in reading GM is that the text regularly alternates between descriptive and critical postures—between, on the one hand, honoring the causes and power of life-averse culture, and on the other hand, proclaiming the need to overcome the paradox and pathology of life-aversion, which requires an overcoming of both a transcendent God and a nihilistic loss of meaning in a godless world (GM II, 24).

2 Christian revenge in *The Antichrist*

The Antichrist is in some ways a continuation of Nietzsche's genealogical analysis. Yet, unlike the shifting between description and critical attack in GM, *The Antichrist* is a more concentrated and sustained assault against anti-natural beliefs embodied by Christianity. But certain subtleties remain, especially the far-from-critical account of Jesus as a figure very much removed from established Christianity, if the latter is taken as a world-forming cultural force inherited from Paul and his response to the life and death of Jesus. In any case, Nietzsche launches a robust campaign against Christianity, which is the most prominent case of a life-denying project and the elevation of weak human beings over the life-affirming character of strong, noble types (A 5). Shorn of its fictional picture of a life to come, Christianity represents a decadent turn against life instincts and thus the very practice of nihilism (A 6). Christian religion and theology are at bottom the work of the ascetic priest portrayed in GM (A 8). The priestly culture established by Judaism and modified by Christianity was a world-forming set of practices, values, and institutions, which declared war on natural life energies (A 5) and in time achieved enough force in the world to overcome the original lack of agency in slave morality and give more credence to hopes for salvation in the hereafter.

Nietzsche nevertheless takes seriously the radical values of renunciation portrayed in the life of Jesus, and he dissociates Jesus as a "redeemer" from any

world-shaping culture. Jesus was not the launch of a Christian world; he was the anti-cultural redeemer (A 30–35), who perfected anti-natural asceticism into a deliberate repudiation of all normal endeavors in life (sex, family, law, judgment, contestation). In effect, Nietzsche is giving a naturalistic account of Jesus, a man who came forth to proclaim the virtue of turning against the world and culture, not a promise of another life, not the establishment of a church, but simply the peace and pleasure of withdrawing from the ways of the world (A 30).

> Jesus could be called a "free spirit," using the phrase somewhat loosely—he does not care for solid things: the word *kills*, everything solid *kills*. The concept, the *experience* of "life" as only he knew it, repelled every type of word, formula, law, faith, or dogma. He spoke only about what was inside him most deeply. . . . He saw everything else, the whole of reality, the whole of nature, language itself, as having value only as a sign, a parable. . . . This sort of symbolism *par excellence* is positioned outside all religion, all cult concepts, all history, all natural science, all experience of the world, all knowledge, all politics, all psychology, all books, all art. . . . He does not know anything about *culture*, even in passing, he does not need to struggle against it, he does not negate it. The same is true about the state, about the whole civic order and society, about work, about war. (A 32)

This is why Nietzsche can say that "there was really only one Christian, and he died on the cross" (A 39). Jesus simply taught a way of life, a passive renunciation of normal existence, even to the point of inviting harm (A 34–36), as in turning the other cheek. From this standpoint, Christianity is essentially a practice, not a set of beliefs or institutions—a practice that Nietzsche says is indeed possible, even needful for some, today (A 39).[3] Jesus therefore represents the most extreme "cure" for the sick animal of humanity: short of suicide, he finds meaning in living against life—not unlike, I think, the consummation in Schopenhauer's pessimism of willing not to will.[4]

Nietzsche offers that Jesus did not render moral judgments or talk of guilt (A 33); he simply proclaimed the living unity of God and man, an egoless withdrawal from matters of the world into divine quiescence (A 41). Christianity became judgmental and moralistic after the humiliating death of Jesus, when revenge set in against a world that could denigrate and destroy such a man (A 40). For Nietzsche, it was Paul who embodied this vengeance and set the stage for the Christian church, the system that came to condemn and reform natural life energies.

> The disastrous fate of the evangel was sealed with his death, it hung on the "cross." . . . It took this death, this unexpected, ignominious death, it took the

> cross, which was generally reserved for the rabble, it took this horrible paradox to bring the disciples face-to-face with the true riddle: "Who was that? What was that?" . . . *Who* killed him? *Who* was his natural enemy? . . . At this point, people started to feel as if they were in revolt against the order, they started to understand Jesus as having been in *revolt against the order*. Before this, his image had not had any belligerent, no-saying, no-doing features at all; in fact, he was the opposite of all this. . . . But his disciples were far from being able to *forgive* this death, which would have been evangelical in the highest sense; . . . *Revenge* resurfaced, the most unevangelical feeling of all. It was impossible for this death to be the end of the matter: "retaliation" was needed. (A 40)

In order for revenge to take hold and prosper, the scheme of an afterlife was required, in which earthly wickedness would be punished and otherworldly faith rewarded.

> From now on, a number of different things started seeping into the type of the redeemer: the doctrines of judgment and return, the doctrine of death as a sacrifice, and the doctrine of the *resurrection*; . . . With the rabbinical impudence that characterizes everything about him, Paul put this interpretation, this *perversion* of an interpretation into a logical form: "*if* Christ did not rise from the dead, then our faith is in vain." And in one fell swoop, the evangel becomes the most contemptible of all unfulfillable promises, the *outrageous* doctrine of personal immortality. . . . Paul himself still taught it as a *reward*! (A 41)

Although Nietzsche does not say so explicitly, it seems evident that Paul is a prime example of the ascetic priest in GM, who fashions retributive psychological power over noble values in order to shore up the prospects of slave morality and reform the world according to anti-natural values.[5] In any case, Paul compensates for the demise of Jesus by emphasizing a life after death where the righteous will enjoy eternal bliss and the wicked will suffer eternal damnation. The promise of personal immortality and divine retribution far exceeds the abdicating bliss of Jesus by actively advancing against worldly power and elevating the virtues of the weak (A 42–43).

Christianity spread, according to Nietzsche, not because the pagan world was corrupt but because Paul fought against healthy instincts and lured pagans by "summing up and surpassing" existing "subterranean cults" in the ancient world with powerful visions of cosmic retribution and transformation (A 58). Here and in other texts, Nietzsche is happy to focus on Christian narratives of power reversal, where virtues of the weak are rewarded not only with salvation but also the glorious destruction of a fallen world and retaliation against evildoers. One

thinks, naturally, of the Apocalypse in the Book of Revelation, a ghastly spectacle of vengeful annihilation, the Last Judgment following the Second Coming—Jesus is back, and he's pissed!—where one can almost hear the finale of the "1812 Overture" as soundtrack. Also pertinent is Nietzsche's citation of Tertullian in GM I, 15, which is meant to illustrate the psychology of *ressentiment*: Tertullian offers a full condemnation of the pagan world and he outbids its attractions with the greater pleasures of witnessing God's judgment, where an "insatiable gaze" is cast upon the eternal sufferings of sinners in hellfire and the tortures of those who abused or refused Jesus—politicians, philosophers, actors, artists, athletes, even mimes—a spectacle that Tertullian says is more pleasing than any pagan circus.

Christianity's early apocalyptic expectations faded when the Second Coming did not come. As messianic hopes for the end of the world grew dim, Christianity evolved from its erstwhile sequestration from normal life to a gradual accommodation with the ways of the world and its historical possibilities. Consequently, Christian anti-natural values came to shape world history and culture (contra the posture of Jesus) in such a way that life on earth was pitched against natural life intellectually, politically, morally, and institutionally.[6] Christianity was able to establish a remedial disdain for earthly existence that was nevertheless still animated by an ever-deferred Apocalypse. Yet, such a posture includes modern "secular" movements like democracy and socialism that simply sustain Christian values without any supernatural references, thereby persisting as divine "shadows."[7] Such is the heritage of Christianity that Nietzsche is called upon to attack for the paradoxical de-naturing of natural life (A 25). In *The Antichrist*, the attack is merciless and unambiguous:

> Christianity has been the worst thing to happen to humanity so far. (A 51)

> Parasitism is the church's *only* practice, drinking all the blood, all the love, all the hope out of life with its ideals of anemia and "sanctity." . . . I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great innermost corruption, the one great instinct of revenge . . . the one immortal blot on humanity. (A 62)

There is nothing here of the subtlety in GM, but rather outright condemnation. The assault is likely targeting not every aspect of Christianity (recall the positive account of Jesus), but the world-transforming effects of the church and its historical permutations of institutional control—with only some exceptions like the Renaissance, which however was rebuked by Luther for "corruption" that was in fact its life-embracing vitality (A 61). In any case, Nietzsche is happy

to adopt the posture of "Antichrist," which in Christianity represented either a false Messiah or the cosmic opponent of Jesus who will be battled in the Second Coming. Nietzsche calls for "a philosophy of the Antichrist" (BGE 256), which heralds a coming redeemer of the earth: "This Antichrist and anti-nihilist, this conqueror of God and nothingness—*he must come one day*" (GM II, 24). On one occasion, Nietzsche even claims the iniquitous name for himself: "I am, in Greek, and not just in Greek, the *Anti-Christ*" (EH Books, 2).

3 A God revived?

Despite Nietzsche's antipathy to Christianity and the Christian God in *The Antichrist*, I want to argue that it need not entail an atheistic denial of divinity outright. In the midst of his broadsides against Christianity—a religion driven by an aversion to natural life, which amounts to "the deification of nothingness" (A 18)—Nietzsche offers some interesting remarks about other possibilities of deification and religion that are not life-averse. The Christian God is a god of the sick, which is called "one of the most corrupt conceptions of god the world has ever seen . . . a new low in the declining development of the types of god" (A 18). He mentions northern European peoples, whose "skill in religion" withered when they failed to reject the Christian God (A 18). He has positive things to say about Buddhism (A 20) and the Hindu Book of Manu (A 56). He objects to Christianity because it *lacks* "sacred purposes," because it pursues *bad* purposes that poison and slander life (A 56). The predominance of the Christian God in European history leads Nietzsche to this declamation: "Almost two thousand years and not a single new god!" (A 19). Christian "monotono-theism" is pathetic in holding itself to be the pinnacle of "god-creating energy" (A 19). In A 16, Nietzsche seems to say that a critique of the Christian God need not rule out other possibilities of religion, where a people that still believes in itself "projects the pleasure it takes in itself, its feeling of power, into a being that it can thank for all of this." He says that "on this supposition, religion is a form of gratitude . . . and this is why they need a god." But such a deity cannot be the anti-natural Christian God of absolute goodness: it must bestow both benefit and harm, both good and bad, both victory and loss, if it is to be truly lifelike. In another section, Nietzsche contrasts the Judeo-Christian tradition with pagan religion, where "a pagan is anyone who says yes to life, who sees 'god' as the word for the great yes to all things" (A 55).

It is not hard to see much of Nietzsche's positive remarks about religion as fitting the early Greek mythological tradition, which some philosophers, especially Plato, decried because of its immersion in the lived world, its mixture of benign and harmful forces in its array of different deities.[8] Nietzsche, of course, celebrated this mixture in BT, wherein the combined forces of Apollo and Dionysus brought forth tragic drama as the epitome of pre-Socratic Greek culture.[9] Dionysus continued to figure in Nietzsche's texts, all the way to the last line of a late work: "Have I been understood?—*Dionysus versus the crucified*" (EH Destiny, 9).

Although Dionysus is not mentioned specifically in *The Antichrist*, the gestures there toward life-affirming religious possibilities certainly fit Nietzsche's frequent mention of that god in other works of the late 1880s. Twice Nietzsche calls himself a "disciple of the philosopher Dionysus" (TI Ancients, 5; EH P, 2). Dionysus—the paradoxical god of life and death, of sexual regeneration and ritual killing, of bliss and ecstatic self-abandonment—was for Nietzsche the most vivid image for all the conflicted forces of natural life.[10] But I think that religious elements of awe and reverence were equally important for Nietzsche—to capture, if I may, an *übermenschlich* excess beyond human-centered fixations that render powerful life forces problematic and disownable, which generates vengeful abnegation and hopes for deliverance into immortality. As Nietzsche says in *The Antichrist*, "'Salvation of the soul'—in plain language: 'The world revolves around *me*.'" (A 43). So, for Nietzsche, a proper religious attitude—a "sacrificial" disposition in *this* world—could not be based in transcendence and deliverance; it could only "worship" life in all its evident powers of creation and destruction. That is why the myth of Dionysus, where he is torn to pieces and restored to life again, appeals to Nietzsche as a "sacralization" of natural life. Consider this passage from TI Ancients, 4, where "eternal life" is not personal immortality but the ever-productive cycle of life, death, and procreation:

> I was the first one to take seriously that wonderful phenomenon that bears the name "Dionysus." . . . The *fundamental fact* of the Hellenic instinct—its "will to life"—expresses itself only in the Dionysian mysteries, in the psychology of the Dionysian state. What did the Hellenes guarantee for themselves with these mysteries? *Eternal* life. . . . The *true* life as the overall continuation of life through procreation, through the mysteries of sexuality . . . the word "Dionysus" . . . gives religious expression to the most profound instinct of life, directed toward the future of life, the eternity of life—the pathway to life, procreation as the *sacred* path (*heilige Weg*). . . . It was Christianity, with its fundamental *ressentiment against* life that first made sexuality something unclean.

And this contemporary (1888) passage from the notebooks depicts two religious responses to the "sick animal" that is humanity:

> The two types: Dionysus and the Crucified One. . . . Is not the pagan cult a form of thanking and affirming life? Ought not its highest representative be a vindication and deification of life? . . . This is where I set the Dionysus of the Greeks: the religious affirmation of life, of life as a whole, [which] awakens depth, mystery, and reverential awe (*Ehrfurcht*). (KSA 13, 265–66)

That God on the cross became the enduring symbol of Christianity is, for Nietzsche, indicative of its rancor toward the world and its dismissal of earthly life (A 51). In particular, it is the Christian condemnation of the pagan world as "vanity" that most offends Nietzsche's historical sense.

> The entire work of the ancient world *in vain*: I do not have words to express my feelings at something so enormous. . . . *All of this in vain*! Turned overnight into just a memory! Greeks! Romans! The nobility of the instincts and of taste, methodological research, genius in organization and administration, the belief, the *will* to a future of humanity, the great yes to all things made visible as the *imperium Romanum*, made visible to all the senses, the great style no longer just as art, but turned into reality, truth, *life*. . . . And not buried overnight by some natural event! . . . But instead defiled by sly, secretive, invisible, anemic vampires! Not defeated, just sucked dry! The hidden need for revenge, petty jealousy come to *power*! Everything miserable, suffering from itself, plagued by bad feelings, the whole ghetto world of the soul risen *to the top* in a single stroke! (A 59)

With the image of Dionysus, Nietzsche gathers his passion for the pagan world, his prosecution of Christian revenge, and his hopes for an affirmative posture toward earthly existence.

Nietzsche's clear self-association with Dionysus is expressed in BGE 296, where he refers to Dionysus as a "genius of the heart," a kind of conscience that nourishes and inspires new possibilities, "new wills and currents." He calls himself "the last disciple and initiate of the god Dionysus," who is "that great ambiguity and tempter/experimenter god (*Versucher-Gott*)," to whom he offered as a *sacrifice* his "firstborn in all secrecy and reverence" (which is a reference to his first book, BT). Addressing his readers, Nietzsche expresses hesitancy about his pronouncement because

> I have heard that you do not like believing in God and gods these days. And perhaps in recounting my story, I will have to take frankness further than will always be agreeable to the strict habits of your ears?

Despite his reverent praise for Dionysus, Nietzsche imagines the god demurring at public honor and counseling him to "Keep this for yourself." Yet, despite the ambivalence implied here, Nietzsche seems comfortable expressing a kind of religious attitude toward Dionysus.

4 *Amor fati* and eternal recurrence

It is well known that Nietzsche expresses the affirmation of life in terms of *amor fati* and its articulation in eternal recurrence.

> *Amor fati*: let that be my love from now on! . . . All in all and on the whole: some day I want only to be a Yes-sayer! (GS 276)

> My formula for human greatness is *amor fati*: that you do not want anything to be different, not forewords, not backwards, not for all eternity. Not just to tolerate necessity, . . . but to *love* it. (EH Clever, 10)

Eternal recurrence is a picture of world-time that pushes *amor fati* to the limit. Genuine affirmation of life says yes to everything that happens by willing its eternal repetition, which cannot find relief in transcendent hopes. Yet, the recurrence scheme also forbids a worldly teleological script of perfection, the pessimistic relief of nothingness, and even the possibility of eternal novelty.[11] As I have argued in the past, such affirmation does not entail the *approval* of all things, because according to the agonistic structure of will to power—which is directly implicated in eternal recurrence (Z II On Redemption)—one's own meaning is necessarily linked to *overcoming* counter-meanings. So, eternal repetition includes eternal resistance to counter-meanings.[12] In this way, one affirms a life that includes limits to one's interests, limits that have spawned all the life-averse outlooks challenged by Nietzsche.

Amor fati and eternal recurrence could be ascertained apart from any religious or sacred reference. Yet, Nietzsche specifically links eternal recurrence to the god Dionysus in *Ecce Homo* Books: Z, 6. In TI, directly after the aforementioned declaration of the Dionysian giving "religious expression to the most profound instinct of life, . . . the eternity of life" (TI Ancients, 4), Nietzsche recalls his early interest in Greek tragedy and calls the Dionysian a yes-saying "counter-example" to Schopenhauerian pessimism. Continuing, he writes that BT

> was my first revaluation of all values: and now I am back on that soil where my desires, my *abilities* grow—I, the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus—I, the teacher of eternal recurrence. (TI Ancients, 5)

Eternal recurrence represents Nietzsche's "biodicy," as a countermeasure to a pessimistic denial of life and a Christian judgment against life in favor of transcendence—which from a naturalistic standpoint amounts to the same thing as pessimism, as Schopenhauer saw clearly. Both pessimism and Christianity stem from revenge against time, "the will's ill-will toward time and its 'It was'" (Z II, On Redemption), against the misfortunes of life that cannot be undone. Affirming eternal recurrence overcomes such chronophobia by accepting the necessity of life's unfolding, to the point of desiring its eternal repetition. In this context, it is interesting to note that Schopenhauer and Augustine both confronted and rejected the possibility of life repeating itself. Schopenhauer tells us that "at the end of his life, no man, if he be sincere and also in possession of his faculties, will ever wish to go through it again" (1958: 324). Augustine, in *The City of God*, directly argued against pagan models of cyclic repetition in favor of the Christian idea of linear time stretching from a one-off creation to salvation after the end of the world—because salvation followed by repetition of the fall is absurd, and so a "godless" circularity should be corrected by the "straight path" of divine deliverance (1950: Book 12, Chs. 13, 17, 18, 20). The linear structure of Christian time was indeed codified in the West by measuring history according to what came before and after the time of Jesus Christ.

Amor fati and eternal recurrence, on the other hand, with their Dionysian constitution, issue a sacralization of, and reverence for, natural existence. The linear picture of world-historical time in Western thought, with its teleological script of overcoming or escaping forces of nature, is exchanged for the earth-time of cyclic destruction and regeneration.[13] Accordingly, Dionysus is specifically rendered by Nietzsche as the Antichrist (BT ASC, 5). The "cure" for human sickness can no longer countenance life-averse treatments, but must now embrace the Dionysian therapy of eternal recurrence. As indicated earlier, compared to animal health, human sickness is an inevitable consequence of the temporal awareness of becoming and its destructive effects. Indeed, it is a productive sickness, since it is no longer immersed in present immediacy. The therapy for human sickness cannot be a return to animal health (see WS 350); it must convert a dis-eased temporal consciousness into the recuperation of eternal recurrence, of willing the temporal structure of natural life—which moves from judgments against time to the "innocence of becoming" (TI Errors, 8). The Dionysian affirmation of eternal recurrence therefore performs a reversal of Christian revenge against the earth. In the words of Zarathustra: "Once sacrilege against God was the greatest sacrilege, but God died, and thereby

the sacrilegious did too. Sacrilege against the earth is now the most terrible thing" (Z Prologue, 3). When we are called to "remain faithful to the earth" (Z Prologue, 3), in effect Nietzsche proclaims the "glad tidings" of life before death.

Notes

1 Natural science cannot be a proving ground for atheism because it is still attached to Christian value judgments (KSA 12, 108). Nietzsche does on occasion identify himself with atheism (EH Clever, 1; EH Books, Untimely Ones, 2), but it seems to be in opposition to existing religious systems; and in any case, it is not a matter of cognitive critique but contesting Christian ways of life and ideals with counter-ideals.
2 See GM III, 13 and Hatab 2008: 143–46.
3 See also BGE 61.
4 Indeed, Schopenhauer claimed that the pessimistic denial of the will to live is not his invention because it has been the core of Christian asceticism. His philosophy simply gives conceptual form to this core without any mythological depiction of eternal life to come (1958: 383).
5 For the connection between Paul and the ascetic priest, see Conway 2008: 128–34.
6 See Shapiro 2016: Ch. 6. Especially helpful is a discussion of Franz Overbeck, a friend of Nietzsche's who wrote about the shift in Christianity from early renunciation to an appropriation of pagan philosophy and institutions in order to justify its place in a fallen world and fight off heresies and rival religions (188–95).
7 In an 1881 note, Nietzsche calls political secularization a "delusion" (KSA 9, 504).
8 See Hatab 1990.
9 See Hatab 2001: 45–56.
10 See Hatab 1990: Ch. 5.
11 For a discussion, see Hatab 2005: 85–89.
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13 See Shapiro 2016: 180–81.

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2

History, Nature, and the "Genetic Fallacy" in *The Antichrist*'s Revaluation of Values

Tom Stern

Nietzsche's later writings about morality depict a historical shift in our moral value system—a revaluation or, more loosely but naturally translated, a "turnaround" in our values. The outline is familiar to readers of GM and *The Antichrist*: contemporary, Western, "Christian" morality is not the only moral code, nor was its dominance inevitable. Instead, it is, in important respects, atypical: it arose from an unusual set of (purportedly) historical circumstances, which placed pressures on a particular group (or groups) of people. Nietzsche's very descriptions of this historical shift are also intended to play some part in working against its consequences, that is, against Christian values (GM P; A 1–3). That is, the right kind of account of that first turnaround in values will itself play a part in liberating us from contemporary morality's grip. It will therefore contribute in some way to a further turnaround, another revaluation of values, which in *The Antichrist* is broadly conceived of as a turning-*back*-around—a re-turn to how things were in the first place, albeit with some differences (A 9; A 59).

The idea that history-writing could aid in performing such a function leaves a great deal open and we can point to two standard objections. First, there is a factual problem: some of Nietzsche's readers may not be convinced that there was such a historical event, nor anything sufficiently resembling it. If he depends upon a plausible historical account to make his argument, and if his historical account is implausible, then his argument suffers accordingly.

Second, there is the well-known "genetic fallacy": we might fail to see how a perfectly accurate historical account could alter, undermine, or even have any bearing on our current moral outlook—how, in the words of Alexander Nehamas's classic study, it "is objectionable simply because it has an objectionable origin" (1985: 107). It is still customary, in discussing this topic,

to point to those places in which Nietzsche is alleged to show a clear awareness of the genetic fallacy (especially GS 345; see also BGE 2; KSA 11: 26 [161], pp. 189–90; KSA 12: 2[131], p. 132; 2[189], p. 160).[1] Since he knows that origin does not undermine value (so most commentators tell us), he cannot be interpreted as arguing that origin undermines value. In fact, I will argue against reading GS 345 as Nietzsche's acknowledgment of a genetic fallacy of this kind—it is no such thing, and what he argues there is more complex and more interesting. But the general critical agreement that there is such a fallacy, and that Nietzsche acknowledged it, has been sufficient to motivate further interpretative moves.

Faced with these two objections, a number of interpretative options are available. Any move to downplay the functional role of history in Nietzsche's critique will obviously protect against both of them: if the history is not that important, then the fact that it is shaky in terms of accuracy, and the fact (if it is one) that history cannot actually be critical, do not matter to Nietzsche. GM is often described as some variant of "more psychology than history" (Solomon 1994: 96–97). There is some evidence that Nietzsche does not *exclusively* rely on history in his critique of morality: one passage in GM suggests that historical critique is but one tool among many. Still, other passages give it a more central role.[2] The interpretative disadvantage to a purely psychological reading is that one thereby loses a sense of why Nietzsche presents his account as historical *at all*: GM and *The Antichrist* are both histories, and GM I ends by advocating a research program with the help of historians and philologists. Surely there is some room between essential and superfluous?

For those who want to keep the historical element central to the critique, a prominent interpretation is to suggest that he is engaged in a form of internal criticism: he is criticizing Christian morality using its own criteria. Here, again, there looks to be some protection against both of our initial problems: all Nietzsche needs is for his opponent to *believe* his historical account, and for it to be unacceptable by *her* criteria. Again, there is supporting evidence for a variety of versions. One candidate might be taking pleasure in cruelty, which Nietzsche takes as both a key factor in the widespread appeal of Christian morality and objectionable by that morality's own standards: Christians will find this objectionable, but Christian morality (on Nietzsche's account) depends upon it, both in its origins and in the present day (GM II 7, 18).[3] A second candidate might be the "internal," Christian commitment to truth, which Nietzsche posits in GM: if Christian morality depends on false or unreliable beliefs, and these are exposed in Nietzsche's writings, then the Christian is refuted or shaken up by his own

standard. *The Antichrist* 24 suggests that some of Nietzsche's targets falsely believe that Christianity is fundamentally different from Judaism, when in fact it is not and, later on, Nietzsche claims that Christianity cannot tolerate scientific insight (A 47–48). Finally, the Christian might simply think, much as Schopenhauer did, that morality is self-evident, intuitive, and accessible to all people at all times, independent of context or circumstance. To such a person, the very fact that something like morality could be, to invent an ugly term, "genealogable"—that a plausible genealogy could be given for it, which described it as following on from the *sorts* of contingent historical events and psychological mechanisms that Nietzsche describes—is already to undermine it (TI "Reason" 1). An inaccurate or sketchy genealogy of morality might nonetheless convince the Christian that morality is genealogable, hence not the kind of thing she thought it was.

How effective we take this internal criticism to be may well depend on whom we take Nietzsche's opponent to be. Some of the philosophical literature tends to assume that Nietzsche, and therefore any appropriate interpretation of him, attempts to refute, with argumentation, an intellectually able Christian interlocutor (Kail 2011). In response to the three internal criticisms given above, such an opponent might be willing, respectively, to acknowledge her own cruelty and therefore immorality, to insist on her moral views in spite of the false beliefs or unreliable processes which gave rise to them, or to argue that morality is genealogable but still, as it happens, independently justified. There is more to be said about the internal criticism, both as an interpretation of Nietzsche and as a response to the genetic fallacy. However, I do not intend to pursue it further, primarily because, on my interpretation, Nietzsche is *not* offering an internal criticism, at least not in a straightforward sense. Still, we should note that, at least regarding *The Antichrist*, this is the text in which Nietzsche writes that "nobody is free to become a Christian or not to do so; one is not 'converted' to Christianity—one must be sufficiently sick for it" (A 51). It is odd to imagine that the correct principle of *interpretation* for the author of these words, in his battle against Christianity, would be to search for the best argument for defeating a philosophically sophisticated Christian opponent. We are free to search for a best argument if *we* are so inclined, but it will not necessarily be Nietzsche's own, nor will our standards necessarily be his.[4]

The aim, here, is to present the best case for an interpretation which, while remaining faithful to Nietzsche's texts, shows how Nietzsche would have answered the two problems raised at the start: the factual problem and the genetic fallacy. We can do this without downplaying history's role. And we

can do it without an appeal to "internal criticism." The aim is not, however, to get Nietzsche out of trouble at all costs. Indeed, I will argue that nonstandard versions of both of these initial problems do indeed plague Nietzsche's project. The best way to begin this analysis is to look in more detail at how Nietzsche makes use of history in his account of the turnaround in values, especially in *The Antichrist* 24–26.

1 A turnaround in values: The origins of Judaism

Questions about the relationship between Nietzsche's historical account and its critical import are typically answered with respect to GM: it is the focus of all the discussions cited thus far. But looking at *The Antichrist* has advantages. The most obvious one, with respect to Nietzsche's central description of the historical revaluation of values, relates to what I called the "factual problem": *The Antichrist* 24–26's account of the revaluation at the core of the Judeo-Christian religion is the most detailed and also the most historically plausible, both to his contemporaries and to us. The cause is Nietzsche's intensive reading of Julius Wellhausen's recently published works on the history of Israel, which took place between GM and *The Antichrist*.[5] These works are known to have had a major influence on Nietzsche's thought.[6] Whereas GM perhaps vaguely gestures at the Jews living under the Romans as a source of the revaluation (e.g., GM I 16) and may have drawn on earlier, Greek sources, such as Theognis (Geuss, 2011: 12–23), *The Antichrist* specifically locates the significant change much earlier, in the historical events which led to the formation of the Jewish religion itself. One can perhaps say, of GM, that "the evidence, if it can be called that, consists in a few scattered etymologies that can . . . neither explain nor demonstrate his interpretation" (Jensen 2013: 170), or that its history is "not properly localized to times, places, or individuals" (Janaway 2007: 11).

But this will not do for *The Antichrist*, which, to be sure, does not *provide* the evidence by raking over the historical literature, but which, we shall see, makes decent use of it. Since so many questions have been raised about the relationship between history and critique in his work, Nietzsche's "best" historical account would seem a natural place to look. A's revaluation story depends, for its sources, on good, contemporary scholarship, which is still highly respected to this day. This scholarly work, although well established in the philological literature on Nietzsche, is still relatively unknown or underexplored, especially

in the Anglophone, philosophical literature. This makes it easier, and more appealing, to downplay or explain away the historical element.[7] But a closer examination of A's turnaround, together with another look at Nietzsche's alleged acknowledgment of the genetic fallacy, will also give us insight into how he might have responded to the genetic fallacy charge. To begin with, then, we look at the historical context of the turnaround in values.

2 Wellhausen's critical history

Julius Wellhausen's approach to origins of Judaism is one that would have been familiar to Nietzsche from his own professional training: he treats the Hebrew Bible as a collection of man-made texts, asking questions about how and why these texts were altered over time, invoking knowledge of the original languages and the social and historical contexts in which they were used. Often, the results of this patient scholarship come into direct conflict with the traditional wisdom regarding the text, the events themselves or, in the case of sacred documents, the religious practices which claim to draw on them. Nineteenth-century German philology was a small world: Wellhausen was a former colleague and friend of Ulrich Wilamovitz-Moellendorf, Nietzsche's former adversary. Wilamowitz was trying, as he saw it, to make similar advances with Homer's texts to the ones that Wellhausen had made with his investigations into the origins of Judaism (Momigliano 1982: 49–64).

What were these advances? We begin with what might be called the "traditional" Judeo-Christian founding narrative. The Israelites are enslaved in Egypt; through Moses, God brings them out of Egypt. Then, the key moment occurs: God passes to Moses a set of laws which form the basis of the Jewish religion. Armed with these fixed laws, Moses leads his people to their new land, where they eventually take political control. The central text of Judaism, the Torah or Pentateuch (for Christians, the first five books of the Old Testament), is traditionally said to be written by Moses and its narrative continues up to the end of his life. (Hence, on the traditional account, Moses narrates his own death at Deuteronomy 34.) Therefore, the central text, and the laws it prescribes, are firmly in place prior to anything which occurs once the Israelites take military and political control of the land, and long before they lose it. What happens next, which includes the activities of the early kings like Saul, David, and Solomon, occurs after the basic formation of the Jewish religion. The Israelites divide into

a Northern and a Southern Kingdom (which includes Jerusalem). The Northern Kingdom is defeated by the Assyrians. The Southern Kingdom is defeated by the Babylonians, whereupon a significant part of the population is taken into exile. Finally, upon the defeat of the Babylonians by the Persians, a significant portion of the exiles return to Jerusalem.

By the time that Nietzsche was reading contemporary critical analysis of the Hebrew Bible, this traditional narrative was untenable as a historical account. For example, in crucial passages in the biblical narratives, Saul, David, Solomon, and those around them are depicted as operating with no knowledge of certain passages of the Torah.[8] Moreover, the Torah showed traces of distinct source documents which had been edited together. Several kinds of evidence pointed in that direction. There were doubled narratives, suggesting that there were originally two different versions of the same story in circulation. There were contradictions or tensions within a given text. Another well-known sign was the fact that the god of the Hebrew Bible is given different names in different places—"Yahweh" and "Elohim," among others—some of which are associated with particular and differing styles or theological agendas. Careful studies of this evidence led scholars to label, characterize, and provisionally date what we might call different "layers" of the Torah. Wellhausen thought that the earliest text was "J," a source which calls god "Yahweh" (German: *Jahweh*, hence the "J"). In J, for example, God is described anthropomorphically: he shuts the door of the ark, once Noah has entered it (Gen. 7:16). *The Antichrist* different source speaks of "Elohim," not Yahweh, and suggests a less anthropomorphic god: it became known as "E." These texts were thought to have been combined and edited into a text known as "JE."

A third and later source was known as "D" because it is closely associated with the book of Deuteronomy. Two points about D are significant for our purposes. First, Nietzsche draws on a credible but now-contested theory about the composition of D in 2 Kings 22-23.[9] Since the details do not concern us, we can summarize it as follows: D was forged for political and religious purposes—a trick played by King Josiah on his gullible people. The second point is D's use of conditionality. D, unlike JE, seeks to impress on the reader that the people of Israel's presence in the land of Canaan is not automatic or necessary: on the contrary, they are there *conditionally*, in virtue of keeping to a deal with God. The rival contemporary view was altogether different: when a people who worship a particular god (Yahweh) are defeated by a people who worship a different god (Ashur), it is because Ashur is better than Yahweh. On D's new view, however,

when Yahweh-worshippers are defeated by Ashur-worshippers, *Yahweh* is still in charge of historical events: the Ashur-worshippers are a punishment *from Yahweh*. For critical-historical readers, therefore, there were reasons to suppose that D was written in response to defeat, and as a way of holding on to a belief in the power of Yahweh. Since Josiah's reforms in the Southern Kingdom took place after the total defeat of the more powerful Northern Kingdom, it was not unreasonable to view D's outlook as a response to this catastrophic event: Yahweh had sent the Assyrians to punish the Northern Kingdom for its disobedience; the Southern Kingdom had better obey.

This theological shift may appear to be of relatively minor significance, but it is, on Wellhausen's reading, of crucial importance for the history of morality. Take D's interpretation of the defeat of the Yahweh-worshippers by the Ashur-worshippers. What is Ashur's involvement now? Obviously, Ashur and the other Assyrian gods are not in charge of things: they are in no position to oppose Yahweh's decision to send Ashur's people in as a punishment to Yahweh's people. So Yahweh is at least stronger than Ashur. Perhaps there is no Ashur at all? In other words, the outlook of D paves the way for monotheism and, with it, for a single moral code which applies to all peoples at all times. The suggestion is not that this is all invented, all at once, in D, nor that this is what its first authors had in mind. But Nietzsche's sources for *The Antichrist* 24–26 are already pointing out the significance of the Deuteronomistic viewpoint for the history of religion and morality: it is a shift away from a god who, like others, defends a people and a place, toward a god who generally punishes the bad and rewards the good, where good and bad can now begin to be understood as ranging across all groups of peoples, all times and places. The connection between monotheism and the transformation of values should be emphasized, since it was salient to Nietzsche. The move from many gods to one god is not merely an insignificant shift in the number of gods one happens to believe in, as it might be if one went from believing in eighteen gods to believing in seventeen. Where there are two or more gods, they may conflict, expressing different and perhaps equally valid moral codes. When, for example, Aphrodite cheats on her husband, Hephaestus, with Ares, the god of war, Hephaestus traps them in hidden chains and invites the gods to witness their shame. In Homer's description, some gods have sympathy with Hephaestus, while others wish only that they could take Ares's place with Aphrodite. In a monotheistic context, this disparity of divine responses is no longer available. A single god, having no peers, faces no opposition, knows no restrictions, need not experience lust or

other socially complex feelings, and can more easily be seen to be the legislator of a single, unchallenged system of right and wrong: thou shalt not commit adultery.

The fourth source is "P," the "priestly code," which is characterized by a remote and impersonal deity, such as the one who features in Genesis 1, calmly creating the world in a series of days (as opposed to the more anthropomorphic god, who goes for a walk in Gen. 3:8, and is thought not to be from P). This source is "priestly" because it is most concerned with law, ritual, lists of genealogies, and the precise details of pious worship. P establishes the connection between stories of Abraham and Moses and the rituals, laws, and festivals which relate to them: circumcision is imposed on Abraham; Passover is celebrated on departing Egypt. P, for Wellhausen, is uninterested in kings, not requiring them for the appropriate worship of god. Indeed, all the major religious institutions are, according to P, set up prior to the establishment of political organizations in the land of Israel. Another characteristic of P is its presence at the beginning and end of main passages, which suggested to some scholars that whoever was writing P was also editing and perhaps altering the other sources—this was one of the reasons why P was thought to be the latest source. One can also imagine that a religion which existed independently of monarchical power would be well suited to those either in exile in Babylon, or returning to Jerusalem under the Persians, since there was no longer a Yahweh-worshipping king. But one could also date the sources using the sorts of arguments that Nietzsche knew from his philological training: if a passage in Deuteronomy appears to have knowledge of JE material in (what is now) Exodus, but no knowledge of the P material in (what is now) Exodus, then that might be evidence that P came after D.

One could therefore go back to earlier Israelite attitudes by trying to extricate J and E, noting the differences in outlook. Moreover, one could trace what happened to these earlier views by looking at the changes made in D, and then P. D and P can both be taken as responses, in different ways, to the lessening and then eradication of political power on the part of the Israelites, at least of a military kind. D's Yahweh can survive his people's defeat: he is powerful even, perhaps especially, when they *lose* in battle, because he himself has sent the armies against them. P's Yahweh has little interest in military victory or defeat: he can be worshipped before, and, implicitly, after his people have a land in their own name. Nonetheless, P and D are different: D is much concerned with good kingship; P is hardly concerned with kingship at all, treating priests as the highest authority.[10]

3 Nietzsche's retelling

This is some of the detail that is helpful to have in place when looking at *The Antichrist* 24–26. The condensed story Nietzsche tells is as follows:

1. First, we find the correct, natural relation: Yahweh protects Israel, giving military victory and agricultural prosperity. Morality under these conditions is "the expression of a condition under which a nation lives and grows . . ., a nation's deepest instinct of life."
2. After military defeat: Yahweh is the god of justice, but no longer "an expression of national self-confidence: now only a god bound by conditions." "Priestly agitators" interpret "all good fortune as a reward, all misfortune as punishment for disobedience."
3. With this, there enters the "moral world-order," in other words the idea that (i) there is one morality which governs the world and (ii) all fortune and misfortune are really divine reward and punishment for obedience and disobedience, respectively.
4. Hence, the priests rework the history of Israel into the form of a story of obedience and disobedience and they present a forged book as having been present at the start of this history. This forged book has the further feature: (iii) divine reward is bestowed on those who obey the full detail of the laws that the priests give to them.

This is not, of course, the end of the story in *The Antichrist*. The Jewish religion may open the way up for universal values, but (Nietzsche thinks) it retains one important element of the first, anti-universal, "correct" relation between the human and the divine: the Jews are still the chosen people in relation to other peoples—in that sense, at least, Yahweh is still their god more than he is the god of their neighbors, and in some sense he therefore favors them above others (A 27). This is to change with Christian universalism, according to which god belongs equally to all people and Jesus is the redeemer of mankind as a whole. Nonetheless, the history of Israel presents the crucial turning point.

4 A provisional response to the factual problem

The material up to this point has been of direct relevance to the first, "factual" problem. Here, one should not give the impression that everything Nietzsche

claims is unproblematically true. First, it is not as though Wellhausen has remained unchallenged in the intervening years.[11] Second, Nietzsche uses sources other than Wellhausen in other parts of *The Antichrist*; in some cases, these sources (and his use of them) become much less respectable. A striking example is his source for the discussion of the Laws of Manu, about which, to say the least, he ought to have known better and which, in any case, he misrepresents (TI "Improvers" 3; A 55–57).[12] Third, Nietzsche does not leave Wellhausen's claims unaltered. Put simply, he wants to make the priests the villains, presenting them as more powerful and more deliberate. To achieve this, he blurs the analysis of D and P: the Deuteronomist interpretation of history, with its emphasis on conditionality (i.e., only if you obey god will he favor you), is blended with the priestly emphasis on highly detailed regulations. To be sure, the Deuteronomist history emphasizes obedience, but it is not so much obedience to highly detailed priestly laws governing the minutiae of everyday life, as general obedience to Yahweh. The forgery of D under Josiah seems to become, in *The Antichrist* 26, the forgery of the self-serving rules of the priests (i.e., P, or perhaps the Torah as a whole).[13] In a limited sense, it is true to say that "when we look at Wellhausen's account, we see that Nietzsche followed it closely."[14] However, this should not be taken to suggest that Nietzsche did not falsify or distort it to suit his needs.

Ultimately, though, I want to suggest that, prima facie, A's account of the Israelites does not fall at the first, factual hurdle, at least in important respects. A significant shift in moral thought does appear to have taken place around the time that Nietzsche specifies—or, at least, there is a perfectly respectable argument to be made along these lines. In some sense, it is likely *true* that the Hebrew Bible, and the Jewish traditions which rest in part upon it, bear signs of significant modification in the light of certain priestly interests and concerns, *true* that the move to monotheism, with emphasis on reward and punishment, was an unintended response to defeat and disempowerment, and *true* that monotheism entails a transformation of values. Finally, we know that Nietzsche was aware of the evidence for all of this and, no doubt, he possessed the skills to appreciate it. Wellhausen's account, to which Nietzsche is indebted, presents the move toward a universalist ethic as a detailed series of local solutions to local problems. To read *The Antichrist* 24–26 without any of the background information, or by focusing exclusively on GM, one could easily imagine that this is all Nietzsche's fantasy. Such a conclusion would certainly be unfair. In scope and in method, I am suggesting, what Nietzsche found in Wellhausen was nothing other than a plausible and well-argued genealogy of morality.

5 A provisional response to the genetic fallacy

The factual context of Nietzsche's history only sharpens our focus on the second problem, namely the genetic fallacy. Granted that A's historical account is plausible to some minimal degree, just what exactly does Nietzsche take this to offer in terms of a critique? Wellhausen, after all, was a Christian universalist—the historical record obviously didn't produce in *him* the response Nietzsche might have liked. To help answer the question, we can look in more detail at Nietzsche's supposed acknowledgment of the genetic fallacy in GS 345, the place where (we are often told) he shows a clear awareness of the issue.

It will be helpful to distinguish two different claims that Nietzsche might be making. First, that "*nothing* about the history [of morality] could have direct bearing on its value" (Geuss 1999: 20, emphasis added). Second, that the history of morality *does not necessarily* have any bearing on its value. Nietzsche only ever claims the second one. And that is fortunate, because he thinks the first one is false, as he makes clear in GS 345.[15] Nietzsche has something specific in mind here and we should examine it, because it will help us to get clearer about what he is up to. Take GS 345's analogy with medicine. In my own terms, Nietzsche's point is as follows. Suppose we want to know whether or not a pill works. I can believe what I like about the pill, such as that it is a magic pill given to me by my fairy godmother: it will still cure me, or not, independently of such thoughts (for the purposes of the analogy, we are ignoring the placebo effect). But *bad* historians of morality (Nietzsche says) have supposed that, by showing me that it was not a magic pill given to me by my fairy godmother, they have shown that the pill *doesn't work*. To adapt some of his other remarks, we could add that if it turns out that the pill was developed through cruel, immoral, or exploitative means, that would also have no impact on its effectiveness.

Does this mean that *nothing* about history bears on morality's value? (This was the first claim, above.) No, that isn't what is meant at all. Let us continue the analogy. Suppose I point to a historical fact indicating that the pill *doesn't work*: a mistake was made in the analysis of the study, which in fact shows that the pill is no better than nothing, or the scientific study of its effectiveness was entirely fabricated by the researchers. It would be absurd to reply: "You are making the mistake of thinking that the pill's history bears upon the study of its effectiveness" or "You are making the mistake of thinking that pointing to the pill's objectionable origin amounts to a critique." I am not making a mistake: we are trying to find out if it is effective and I am providing (historical)

evidence that it is not. You might reply that the pill I am holding either works or it does not, regardless of the studies that were carried out on it. But Nietzsche wants to "*examine*" the effectiveness of morality, that is, of the pill (GS 345, my emphasis). If we want to *know* whether or not the pill is effective, we cannot be uninterested in the relevant historical evidence.

When Nietzsche writes that "a morality could even have grown out of an error, and the realization of this fact would not as much as touch the problem of its value," his point is therefore that being right or wrong about how a medicine (morality) is effective (valuable) *might not* impact an examination of its effectiveness (value)—as with the fairy godmother belief. On the other hand, being right or wrong about *whether* a medicine (morality) is effective (valuable) is the *very point* of an examination of its effectiveness (value)—the historical fact about the misreported or fabricated study certainly touches on that. It would be open to Nietzsche's opponent to say, in reply, that morality is nothing like medicine, that nothing we could tell someone about the history of her values ought to touch upon the values themselves, that to think otherwise would be to commit the genetic fallacy. But my point is merely that such a person would be *disagreeing* with Nietzsche at just the point where Nietzsche is supposed, by critics, to be acknowledging the genetic fallacy: for him, that is like saying that nothing you tell me about the history of the pill in my hand ought to change my belief that it is effective.

Once we have understood Nietzsche's real point, a more pressing question arises: What is the equivalent of the pill's "effectiveness," when we are talking about morals, not medicine? What makes a value system valuable? The answer, bluntly, is whether or not the value system is "natural," by which Nietzsche means something like life-promoting or, equivalently for our purposes, power-increasing (KSA 12: 2 [190], p. 161). A central feature of *The Antichrist* 24–26 was alluded to at the start of this discussion, but has since remained in the background. Nietzsche describes the shift that occurs in the history of Israel not merely as momentous, but as a "falsification of all nature" (A 24), as "a typical history of the *denaturalizing* of all natural values" (A 25, Nietzsche's emphasis); the priest "disvalues, *dissanctifies* nature" (A 26, Nietzsche's emphasis). Throughout his description, then, Nietzsche emphasizes that what is happening under the guidance of the priests is unnatural or anti-natural, whereas, of course, the original relationship between Yahweh and his people is natural.

The claim that contemporary morality is "anti-natural," together with the claim that being anti-natural is *bad*, forms the basis of (the later) Nietzsche's

critique of that morality. Since this fact is not standardly acknowledged in the literature, it would be worth saying another word in its defense. Nietzsche's later philosophy, from about 1886 onward, is characterized by a new focus on nature as a measure of value and, in particular, on contemporary Christian morality as being contrary to the natural way of things (e.g., A 15–16, 24–26, A 39, A's "Gesetz" (KSA 6, p. 254); TI "Morality"; GM I 16, II 22–24, III 3, 12; GS 344; BGE 51, 55; KSA 6, p. 431; 12, pp. 330, 476–77, 541–42, 546, 571–72; 13, pp. 320–24, 380, 402, 523, 599–600, 611–12; WTP 246). We can see that this is new, for Nietzsche, because in some of the writings from his middle period we are told that nature gives us no moral guidance in one direction or another (e.g., GS 301). We, or at least some of us, on this middle view, are the authors of our own values, which cannot be found by investigating the natural world or our place within it. Without signaling or even acknowledging any special change of heart, Nietzsche nonetheless appears to undergo one, at least by the time we get to GM. The hope for GM, *The Antichrist*, and other late texts is that we might see a return to natural values. Clearly, the "will to power," when taken as a natural principle of some kind, is intended to play a part in this critique, and Nietzsche can also simply speak of what "Life" is working to achieve through living things.[16]

What is the significance of this for our understanding of the role of history? Initially, at least, it might look as if he needs no appeal to history whatsoever: once we have determined what is "natural," and once we have determined that contemporary morality is anti-natural, and supposing we prefer what is natural, we have everything we need to put pressure on contemporary values. Why would we bother with history? The answer to this question echoes the medical analogy at work in his supposed acknowledgment of the genetic fallacy. Just as a medical study of a drug would be relevant historical information in determining whether or not it is effective, so a historical study of how *natural* a morality is will tell us how valuable it is. We can expect a historical account—we could better call it a natural-historical account—to tell us what our natural values are and how they operate. But in the present, anti-natural context, in which what is "natural" has become obscure to us, the historical account can also help to combat an obvious set of objections or concerns, which might prevent an interlocutor from accepting Nietzsche's line. If Christian morality is "anti-natural," then why do we have it? Why have we had it for so long? Why does it *feel* natural to us? How could something so contrary to nature even come to pass? Of course, if we had already agreed that Christian morality is anti-natural, then perhaps there would be no need for such a history (and arguably Nietzsche assumes this is the case in

TI "Morality"). But in general, Nietzsche takes it as his task to explain that and how things went wrong (i.e., anti-natural): "Why did life, physiological well-constitutedness everywhere succumb? Why was there no philosophy of Yes, religion of Yes? . . . Is man therefore an exception in the history of life?" (KSA 13: 14[137], p. 321). A's answer to the second question is that there *was* a religion of yes, prior to Judeo-Christian innovations. As for the third: it is not "man" but the *Israelites*, in response to their defeat, who were the exception in the history of life. It was they who spearheaded a shift away from nature. We will return to the first question shortly. For now, the central point is this: in showing us how nature (or "life," or the will to power) operates, Nietzsche is giving us a history which, within his theoretical framework, *directly* criticizes our values.

6 A revised factual problem

I have said that, with regard to the factual problem, it is plausible to say that a major shift in values occurs in the history of the Israelites. But, as we can now see, what Nietzsche really needs for the purposes of his critique is the further claim that this was a shift from the natural to the anti-natural. Wellhausen, too, considers the resulting Jewish religion as something unnatural, compared with earlier, natural, Israelite religion: "The history of the ancient Israelites shows us nothing more prominently than the uncommon freshness and naturalness of their impulses" (Wellhausen 1883: 437). But, later on, the Jewish conception of holiness functions to "separate the Jew from the man," so that the divine is conceived in *opposition* to the natural (Wellhausen 1884: 86). The following are various different senses of "natural" operating in Wellhausen's discussion. The historical development represents a counter-natural shift, given in parentheses.

1. Local and familial worship are associated with mealtimes and integrated into daily life. (Josiah's reforms attempt to abolish local worship in favor of centralization at Jerusalem, hence removing the spiritual from daily life.) (Wellhausen, 1883: 28, 79–85, 449–50.)
2. Worship is simple, joyous, and spontaneous. (P opposes spontaneity and is repeatedly characterized as pedantic and monotonous. Anachronistically, P "micromanages" daily life according to an independent, detailed, external, and incomprehensible set of codes.) (Wellhausen 1883: 99–108.)
3. Religion relates to agriculture: festivals relate directly, for example, to harvest or springtime (Wellhausen 1883: 79). (Festivals become linked to

supposedly historical events, not natural/agricultural cycles. Moreover, Wellhausen sees the Jews moving from agriculture to trade, hence further distancing themselves from the land.)[17]

4. God is bound up with family, a specific geographical location and the nation at war.[18] (P's authors have no knowledge of war (Wellhausen 1883: 378). For P, the political entity already exists, and religion is a separate community within this pre-given entity. The Jewish "nation" has now become artificial, lacking all "natural conditions" (Wellhausen 1884: 88). P is abstract, remote, geographically nonspecific.) (Wellhausen 1883: 354.)
5. God moves within an enchanted nature. (P's Genesis creation story has god as remote and man as having dominion over a mechanical, disenchanted nature, which clearly differs from J's account.) (Wellhausen 1883: 321–24, 331–32.)
6. A god's relation to and support for his people is immediate and unconditional. (D favors conditionality; justice now comes first, ahead of the protection of Israel. P's god is remote, unintuitive, and incomprehensible. The divine order transcends the ordinary life of the people in order to repress it.) (Wellhausen 1883: 442–43, 447–48, and Wellhausen 1884: 97–98.)
7. Broadly, then, we can see that what Nietzsche takes from Wellhausen is not merely a change of values, but a detailed account of a (supposed) shift from nature to anti-nature. To the opponent who asks why anti-natural values could feel intuitively right or even natural to us, Nietzsche has an answer: "On a soil falsified in this way, where all nature, all natural value, all *reality* had the profoundest instincts of the ruling classes against it, there arose *Christianity*." (A 27.)

While Nietzsche is trying to work with Wellhausen's themes, Nietzsche and Wellhausen only partially agree on what counts as natural. At a sufficient remove, one might imagine each of Wellhausen's denaturalizing moves as describing a shift away from power residing in the individual or the group as a whole and toward power residing in the priesthood. Those who are not part of the priesthood have less and less of a say in their own affairs. Indeed, some of Wellhausen's categories, such as (4), fit neatly with Nietzsche's power story. As for (3), agriculture may be associated with growth and prosperity. Nietzsche also attempts to integrate some of the more explicitly religious elements: in *The Antichrist* 16, "natural" sacrifice is understood to be an expression of gratitude to the god who has made a people powerful and strong—this is the god as "will to power," as the god of *this* nation

(as opposed to the different god of another nation), and as a god who knows how to help his people succeed through both good and what would now be called "evil" acts. Conversely, the "anti-natural castration of a god" occurs when the people, as a result of military defeat, turn to a good, universal divinity. A trickier comparison would be the relation of nature to the state: Nietzsche is generally much more suspicious of national or state interests, but in *The Antichrist* 24–26 he follows Wellhausen in treating the state as "natural." Overall, Nietzsche's "state" is characterized by internecine struggle in a way that Wellhausen's is not. But the main difference lies in their aims: Wellhausen is ultimately trying to establish Jesus and Christianity (correctly understood) as a form of spiritual reconciliation between nature and universal morality, with love of one's neighbor as natural Wellhausen (1883: 86–102). For Nietzsche, of course, love of the other is typically a problematic, anti-natural ideal.

There is no special reason to think that Julius Wellhausen was right about the "natural" in itself, so any disagreement between him and Nietzsche may ultimately be of philological rather than philosophical interest. But the brief comparison serves to highlight a weak point in Nietzsche's approach and a return of a different version of the factual problem. To agree that there was a shift toward priestly interests is not to agree that there was an *anti-natural* shift; yet Nietzsche needs to establish the latter for his critical purposes. Perhaps any description of what is "natural" is liable to tell us more about the prejudices of the describer than it does about nature, and Wellhausen, as our list indicates, looks to be a case in point.[19] But the revised worry is not that the historical events described by Nietzsche did not take place: it is that a historical account *could* not provide the sorts of natural "facts" Nietzsche needs.

7 A revised genetic fallacy

My revised factual problem amounts to an external objection to Nietzsche: bluntly, we would be disagreeing with him about whether there are values to be found in nature, and illustrated in human history, to which we ought to commit ourselves. A more pressing criticism from his point of view would be an internal one, showing that he cannot succeed even if there are natural values. I now turn to an objection of that kind, which may profitably be understood as a revised version of the genetic fallacy—a version of the genetic fallacy, that is, that would actually have concerned Nietzsche on his own terms.

I indicated earlier that, in my view, Nietzsche's histories are not best understood as a form of internal criticism. We can now see why: at its most fundamental level, that is, the internal/external question does not arise on Nietzsche's understanding of what he is doing. His central claim is that we are all governed by natural values, and therefore any appeal to them is an appeal to values we share: the *real* values, as it were, are real precisely because they are never external to a living creature. Nietzsche's attack on his opponent, we might say, relies on an "always already" move: the opponent is always already committed to natural values, simply in order to be alive. In that sense, the criticism is indeed "internal." But, of course, the opponent is not (at least initially) *aware* of these values, and therefore Nietzsche is not merely working with the opponent's explicit claims. Part of the project of history-writing is to make some opponents aware of the natural values which already operate through them, even—perhaps precisely—in those who have anti-natural values.

To see the problem, though, we can turn to a question of Nietzsche's, quoted earlier: "Why did life, physiological well-constitutedness everywhere succumb?" On the one hand, it is clear Nietzsche wants to say that the priests are anti-natural, and it is on that basis that we are supposed to object to them (A "Gesetz" (KSA 6, p. 254)): life really did succumb, and that is the problem. On the other hand, Nietzsche's "always already" argument is meant precisely to show that life or nature did not succumb: even those involved in the anti-natural shift were always already working to nature's values. Hence, he wants to say that the Israelite priests are acting naturally (roughly, in a power-seeking manner) all along. By making Yahweh responsible for military downfall, the "Jewish people" make themselves "stronger than any party of life" (A 24), which is to say: stronger than those expressing an *explicitly* natural morality.

In essence, Nietzsche is left with a dilemma. If an anti-natural morality like Christianity really is, deep down, a form of *natural* morality, then there is nothing wrong with it by Nietzsche's (or what he would call "nature's") standards. But if anti-natural morality is *not* as successful as natural morality at fulfilling nature's goals—which he seems to want to argue—then perhaps we are not, or not straightforwardly, always already committed to these goals. If we are not, Nietzsche has lost his quasi-internal critical grip on his reader.

Perhaps it is for this reason that Nietzsche suggests, toward the end of *The Antichrist*, that there are such things as Christian "instincts," and that we have these instincts within us (A 59; see, too, the epilogue to CW). Here, he is trying to make anti-natural behavior "instinctive" or natural. But it is not clear how this

can help him. The obvious conclusion from the existence of anti-natural instincts would be that his descriptive claim about nature controlling our values is false: *we moderns* are no longer fully or deeply committed to what "life" wants—we are not always already natural. Elsewhere in *The Antichrist*, the Christian priest is called a "parasite" for "disvaluing nature" (A 38). Unwittingly, Nietzsche highlights the problem. A parasite does what is natural to it: it does not disvalue nature. My point is not (merely) that Nietzsche contradicts himself: it is that he has to. If the Israelite priests and those who follow them are not fully nature-governed in their actions, then Nietzsche's descriptive account of nature is false. But if they *are* fully nature-governed, then he has no grounds to criticize them for being insufficiently naturally moral. It is telling that, in his praise of the "Manu" laws, Nietzsche admires an explicitly natural, priestly form of domination (A 57).

We have seen that Nietzsche does not recognize the genetic fallacy, at least as standardly presented by critics, in that he thinks that history can be critical. As his medical analogy suggested, history is relevant just where it tells us something relevant: is the medicine/morality effective/naturally valuable? The mistake of the other historians was to take a criticism of the *beliefs* of the Christian as a criticism of their morality's effectiveness. The problem, I am suggesting, is that Nietzsche does the very same, by his standards. It is true, for him, that the Christian *expresses* false, anti-natural beliefs, such as that it is good (or even possible) to be ascetic. But it is *not* true that the Christian's actions are, deep down, anti-natural. Nietzsche's criticisms, like those of his rival historians, end up missing the point.

Notes

1 For some examples of this custom, see Loeb 1995: 125–41. On Loeb's own reading, see below. For a sample of subsequent instances, see for example, Kail 2011: 223; Geuss 1999: 20; and Shaw 2010: 89.

2 Compare GM P 5 with GM P 6. See Christopher Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche's Genealogy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 10.

3 "Internal" readings include Geuss 1999 and; Conway 1994. I stress cruelty as a present-day motivation because some commentators prefer to present the "immoral" original motives as no longer operational, hence making the "internal" reading less plausible than in fact it is. (Cf. Kail 2011: 222, where he discusses various internal readings.)

4 On the question of charitable interpretation, see Stern 2016: 287–302.

5 Wellhausen 1883; and Wellhausen 1884. For Nietzsche's notes on Wellhausen, see KSA 13: 11(377): 169–74.

6 See Brobjer 1997: 663–93; Sommer 2013: 126–42; and Jaggard 2013: 344–62. While Nietzsche may have been aware of some of Wellhausen's work as early as 1885, it seems that his intensive study of Wellhausen began in 1887.

7 A notable exception to this is Jaggard (2013) who provides a very helpful introduction to Nietzsche's relation to Wellhausen. Yovel mentions Wellhausen as a possible source, but his tendency to draw from Nietzsche's corpus as a unified whole obscures Wellhausen's relatively late influence and the resultant changes in Nietzsche's thought (1994: 214–36).

8 For example, compare 1 Sam. 8–9 with Deut. 17:14–20. For discussion, see Nicholson 2002: 5.

9 For contemporary criticism of this theory, see Römer 2015: 191–95.

10 Of the many simplifications in my necessarily restricted exposition, this one cannot go without comment: J, E, P, and D were never thought to be monolithic texts, each composed and completed at a particular place and time, and then simply cut and pasted together by the last person who got his or her hands on them. In each case, they contain signs of older layers stretching further back. For a sense of the nuance of Wellhausen's analysis (often simplified by his commentators) and that of his critics, see Nicholson 2002.

11 See generally Nicholson 2002, and especially 95–160.

12 Sommer 2012: 367–69.

13 For discussion, see Sommer 2012: 140 and Jaggard 2013: 350.

14 Jaggard 2013: 349. Generally, Jaggard's helpful outline does not explore Nietzsche's departures from Wellhausen.

15 The other supposed acknowledgments of the genetic fallacy, listed above, also reveal a Nietzsche who makes the second but not the first claim: revealing the shameful origin of some morality does not *itself* amount to critique, he says. It does not follow that *nothing* in the history of those values could be critical. Loeb (1995) has argued against this dominant trend on similar lines, and my discussion is partially indebted to his. However, Loeb views Nietzsche as arguing from a "noble" perspective, which always locates value via descent. I will argue, however, that Nietzsche's key criterion here is not *noble descent* (for which I find little evidence), but what is *naturally valuable* (for which there is a great deal of evidence).

16 Although I do not have the space to discuss this issue here, it seems worth making explicit the implication that (late) Nietzsche does indeed claim an objective standard of valuation, namely in "life" or "nature" (as he understands them). It has seemed, to some commentators, that this is incompatible with his "devastating critique of objective validity" (see Conway 1994: 319, 323). In the late Nietzsche, the best evidence for this "devastating critique" appears to be TI "Improvers" 1. I

take Nietzsche's remarks there merely to indicate that moralities must be judged in terms of their symptoms *in relation to hidden natural values*: Are they symptoms of underlying natural or anti-natural modes? It does not follow that the natural or objective values themselves do not exist.

17 Wellhausen, 105. See also the "denaturalisation of festivals in the Priestly Code" (Wellhausen, 105; also pp. 449–50).

18 Wellhausen 1883: 254–56, 436–37, and Wellhausen 1884: 10.

19 For discussion of Wellhausen's prejudices, see Knight 1982: 21–36 and Silberman 1982: 74–82.

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3

Comparative Religion in *The Antichrist*: Pastiche, Subversion, Cultural Intervention

Antoine Panaïoti

Large portions of *The Antichrist* are dedicated to comparative discussions of the relationship between Christianity and three other important religious traditions, namely Buddhism, Judaism, and Brāhmaṇism. Having said this, Nietzsche's exercise in comparative religion in this text is superficially researched, hermeneutically reckless, and methodologically uncritical. Even by the relatively lenient standards of late-nineteenth-century research, comparative religion in *The Antichrist* is terrible scholarship. Note, however, that such criticism would only have weight if Nietzsche's purpose in this text were indeed to weigh in on the scholarly debates of the day and to set the record straight on the "true" historical and ideological relationships between Christianity and Buddhism, Judaism, and Brāhmaṇism. But was this really his intention? There are, in my opinion, good reasons to doubt that it was. In fact, I would further submit that to think or assume as much betrays a profound misunderstanding of what it is Nietzsche sets out to achieve through his late foray into the fraught terrain of comparative religion.

In this chapter, I argue that Nietzsche's discussion of comparative religion in *The Antichrist* does not aim to disclose the truth or facts about the matters at hand, but is instead strictly tactical. As such, its significance, purpose, and meaning can only be understood against the backdrop of the cultural and intellectual struggles in which it stakes its claims. More precisely, my arguments go to show that comparative religion in *The Antichrist* is best understood as a kind of *pastiche* of comparative religion as it had frequently been practiced in Continental Europe since the days of Voltaire, and more specifically as a pastiche designed to *subvert* Schopenhauer's variation on the time-worn theme of the Judeo-Christian religions' relationship to the Indian. Nietzsche's exercise in comparative religion, I conclude, is best understood as a *cultural intervention*.

The chapter is separated into two parts. In part I, I provide a succinct overview of Nietzsche's main comparativist claims in *The Antichrist*. In part II, I present and defend my interpretation of the status and purpose of Nietzsche's use of comparative religion in this text. In the conclusion, I examine the implications of my interpretation as regards Nietzsche's standing as a philosopher.

1 Comparative religion in *The Antichrist*

Nietzsche advances five main comparativist theses in *The Antichrist*:

1. Christianity and Buddhism are both nihilistic religions of *décadence*, but in every other respect they are diametrically opposed (20–23).
2. The original *εὐαγγέλιον* of Jesus of Nazareth was initially a "Buddhistic peace movement"[1] that stood beyond any form of *ressentiment* (42; see also 31).
3. After the death of Jesus, the early Christian community transformed Jesus's *εὐαγγέλιον* into its opposite, namely a thoroughly un-Buddhistic *δυσαγγέλιον* (or "bad message") animated by an insatiable thirst for revenge (36, 39, and 42).
4. This profound distortion of Jesus's original message represents a Judaicization of original Christianity, albeit in a way that is far more life-negating than Judaism ever had been or could be (42–45).
5. The strictly hierarchical orthodox Brāhmaṇism of the *Manusmṛti* embodies a type of ideology that is the antipode of the anarchist Pauline Christian (56–57).

In the pages that follow, I unpack each of these in turn.

1.1 A tale of two nihilisms

What does Nietzsche mean when he writes that Buddhism and Christianity are both "nihilistic religions" or "religions of *décadence*" (A 20)? And in what sense are they nevertheless, on his account, "separated from one another in the most striking fashion" (ibid.)?

To answer these questions, we must specify what the terms "*décadence*" and "nihilistic" denote in Nietzsche's late prose. *Décadence* describes the psycho-physiological condition of an organism when there is internal disorder and

discord among its drives.[2] Its primary symptoms are profound exhaustion (A 17–18), low resilience (A 29–30), and high irritability (A 15)—or, in a word, "weakness" (EH "Destiny" 4; "Books" BT 2).

At *The Antichrist* 30 Nietzsche explains that the *décadent* type's actions and preferences are primarily governed by two instincts, both of which result from his or her "extreme susceptibility to pain." The first is "*an instinctive hatred of reality*." The *décadent* experiences reality itself as an unavoidable source of pain, and, as a result, comes to feel profound hostility toward it. The second core *décadent* instinct, Nietzsche tells us, is "*an instinctive exclusion of all aversion, of all hostility*." Resistance and struggle are by necessity a source of anguish and suffering for the *décadent*, so it is only natural that s/he should seek to avoid confrontation at all costs.

Central features of such "religions of *décadence*" as Christianity and Buddhism can, on Nietzsche's account, be explained with reference to these two instincts. The notion of salvation that is so central to these traditions is but an expression of the *décadents*' hatred of reality. To wit: be it conceived in terms of entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, *unio mystica*, or *nirvāṇa*, the ideal of salvation betrays a desire to escape from reality into some "other" (read: "unreal") world out of hostility toward reality itself (A 15; GM I 6; TI "Reason" 6). The second primary *décadent* instinct—that is, exclusion of all aversion and hostility—accounts for the central role of a certain kind of love in Christianity and Buddhism. This is a *negative* kind of love, the principle of which is non-aversion, non-enmity, and nonresistance (A 30). As such, it stands in sharp contrast to the positive forms of love Nietzsche values, namely those that involve choosing and thus discriminating, caring and thus at times defending, at times attacking.[3]

The foregoing makes it easier to see why Nietzsche describes the ethos at the heart of Christianity and Buddhism as "nihilistic" or "life-denying." If, as Nietzsche avers, it is of the essence of life to engage with the world, to embrace struggle and strife, to seek to overcome obstacles and resistance, and to cultivate relations founded on positive, discriminating forms of love, respect, and care,[4] then in preaching ideals and values that oppose all of this as folly or sin Buddhists and Christians betray their thoroughly nihilistic, life-denying impulses.

Nietzsche is quick to point out, however, that there is a crucial difference between speaking of folly and speaking of sin in this connection. This is what most fundamentally distinguishes Christianity from Buddhism on Nietzsche's reading. The Buddhist's struggle, Nietzsche explains at *The Antichrist* 20, is

against suffering and the folly that causes it, not against sin. Unlike their deluded Christian counterparts, Buddhists are lucid *décadents* who understand that the causes of human sorrow are unhealthy habits of body and mind for which the individual alone is responsible. In fact, Buddhists reject from the very outset the idea of an omnipotent world-creator, lawgiver, and divine judge, thereby undermining the very foundation of sin and other such moral concepts (ibid.). Christians, in stark contrast to Buddhists, hold primitive metaphysical-*cum*-theological beliefs, hand in hand with their childish moral counterparts, foremost among which is the crude notion that suffering is the consequence of sin—or transgression against God—and that atonement alone can bring it to cessation (A 21).

Buddhism and Christianity are also opposed as regards the practices that they promote. Nietzsche describes the measures the Buddha prescribes to combat suffering as a form of physical and psychological hygiene:[5] a life of open-air travel, the consumption of light food, the cultivation of peace- and cheer-promoting ideas, and, most importantly, the uprooting of all "feelings of revenge, aversion, and *ressentiment*" (A 20; see also EH "Wise" 6). This stands in sharp contrast to Christian practices, which Nietzsche lambasts as grounded in revulsion before the body, the repudiation of hygiene and cleanliness as "sensual," abandonment to such harmful sentiments such as guilt, self-loathing, *ressentiment*, hatred, and the "will to persecute" (A 21–22).

Let us now take a step back to map these crucial differences between Christianity and Buddhism onto *The Antichrist* 30's psychological model of *décadence*. Note, first, that there is an intractable tension between the *décadents*' two primary instincts: while their "instinctive hatred of reality" propels them down the path of *ressentiment* and rancor toward all that is living, *décadents*' "instinctive exclusion of all aversion and hostility" urges them to abandon all feelings of hostility toward self, other, and world. Though Nietzsche never explicitly points to it, this tension is altogether unsurprising, considering that Nietzsche describes *décadents* precisely as people whose instincts are in a state of "anarchy" (TI "Socrates" 4). In light of the foregoing, it stands to reason that Buddhism and Christianity offer two diametrically opposed resolutions to this tension. Buddhism is a genuine religion of (*décadent*) love and peace in which the "instinctive exclusion of all aversion and hostility" is master, while the "instinctive hatred of reality" has been subdued and sublimated into a gentle and unthreatening "turning away from the world." Conversely, in Christianity it is the "hatred of reality" that has gained the ascendant, such that what looks like a message of love and peace is really a message of hatred and war masquerading as its opposite.

It is in this way, I suggest, that Nietzsche can have his cake and eat it too. While Buddhism and Christianity share a common core in that they are religions of *décadent* nihilism, they are also perfect opposites as regards the drive that dominates (and is dominated) in each. They stand on opposite extremes of the nihilist spectrum, and, as such, appear as inverted mirror images of one another.

1.2 Jesus as Buddha

The plot of *The Antichrist* thickens as Nietzsche turns his attention to the figure of what we would now call "the historical Jesus." In stark contrast to the vindictive Jesus of the early Christian community's invention, the real Jesus, Nietzsche tells us, was in fact a kind of "Buddha" figure (A 31) heralding a "Buddhistic peace movement" (A 42). This means that everything Nietzsche writes about the opposition between Christianity and Buddhism at *The Antichrist* 20–23 does not apply to Jesus's actual message. What, then, was the true nature of the *εὐαγγέλιον*, and in what sense was it "Buddhistic"?

Nietzsche suggests that Jesus's *décadent* hostility toward reality takes the unthreatening form of a soft-hearted "anti-realism" that regards time, space, concept, and word as having but apparent reality by contrast with the pure, boundless light of inner bliss, in which all oppositions and distinctions fade (A 34). This, he explains, is why Jesus speaks in parables and metaphors alone: the "Kingdom of God" is not a place, let alone a *πόλις*, but a state of mind equally accessible to all, which is thus both "everywhere and nowhere" (ibid.; see also A 33 and 40); likewise, "God the father" just means the "feeling of eternity and of perfection" that can be achieved when all hatred, resistance, and enmity are transcended, while being the "Son of God"—a title which Nietzsche is adamant Jesus did *not* claim for himself alone (A 29)—merely signals "entrance into this feeling" (A 34).

It follows that Jesus's purpose was not to found a system of faith—that is, a creed based on the profession of belief in propositions taken to be true or factual—but rather a "new life" (A 33; see also A 39), or, as we would now call it, a new "*way of* life." His *εὐαγγέλιον* is a practice, not a doctrine—and this practice, this "new life," is really all that the term "God" denoted in Jesus's teaching (A 33). The genuinely Christian practice taught by Jesus involves the abolition in one's heart and mind of all distinctions, including that between a given proposition and its contrary, self and other, Jew and non-Jew, friend and foe, world and heaven, God and human (ibid.). This, and this alone, is the true meaning of Jesus's teaching of universal love (A 29). And without any such

feeling of distance or distinction, what space could there be for *ressentiment* against the world, the enemy, or the powerful? Indeed, Nietzsche reports, in accepting and even embracing his crucifixion, Jesus sought to provide his followers with the foremost example of "freedom *from* and superiority *to* any feeling of *ressentiment*" (A 40).

This points to the essence of Jesus's *εὐαγγέλιον* as Nietzsche describes it in *The Antichrist*, namely the real-world prospect of leading a life beyond the very possibility of *ressentiment*. And it is in precisely this sense that, for Nietzsche, Jesus heralded a "Buddhistic peace movement": in him, as in the Buddha, the *décadent*'s instinct of "exclusion of all aversion and hostility" is dominant, while the "hatred of reality" is overcome and takes the form of a peaceful "turning away from the world" that has neither an axe to grind nor an enemy to decapitate.

1.3 Hate trumps love

Jesus's original "peace movement," Nietzsche explains, suffered a radical inversion shortly after his death. Instead of cultivating love, forgiveness, and the "feeling of eternity" that follows from the transcendence of all belief, opposition, and distinction, the early Christian community abandoned itself to rancor, anger, and quarrelsome dogmatism. The result was the creation of a religion which stands for the very opposite, or "antipode" (*Gegensatz*) (A 36), of its founder's Buddhistic message. How is it that Jesus's Buddhistic *εὐαγγέλιον* was transvalued into a thoroughly un-Buddhistic *δυσαγγέλιον* (A 39)?

Nietzsche claims that Jesus's followers underwent such a profound shock when their leader was executed that they immediately forgot all that Jesus had stood for. Instead of striving to respond in a genuinely evangelical fashion by "forgiving his death" and "with a gentle and calm heart, *offering* themselves for a similar death," they instead gave in to "most unevangelical feeling," namely that of "*revenge*" (A 40). While Jesus pointed to a truth beyond time, history, guilt, punishment, judgment, and sin—a pure "inner light" in contrast to which everything in space and time seemed but inconsequent shadow play—his disciples placed real-world events center-stage again, complete with a dramatic final act in which the evil would be condemned and the just rewarded, depending on whether they hold the right beliefs (A 39).

Nietzsche is emphatic that the centrality of the belief/disbelief distinction and attendant in-group/out-group opposition in early Christian eschatology is emblematic of the early Christian community's profound misunderstanding of

Jesus's message. Such a misunderstanding was not primarily the result of an intellectual error, but rather of an ethical failing: incapable of overcoming their *ressentiment* and thirst for revenge, Jesus's followers made belief in his resurrection the condition for being spared the Master's world-destructive wrath at the time of his Second Coming.

The figure of Jesus consequently suffered a two-pronged retroactive transformation at the hands of the early Christian community. First, from mystical prophet of love promoting a Buddhistic practice of non-enmity for whom word, idea, and belief were entirely superfluous and disagreement impossible, Jesus turns combative doctrinaire aggressively putting forward specific theological claims (A 31). This, according to Nietzsche, was the result of the early Christians' anger toward the Jewish intellectual elite, whom they deemed guilty of assassinating their leader. "It was only now," Nietzsche writes, "that all the contempt for the Pharisees and the theologians, and all bitter feelings towards them, were introduced into the character of the Master—and by this means he himself was transformed into a Pharisee and a theologian" (A 40). Second, Jesus was elevated to the status of Universal God and Supreme Judge of mankind. Again, this was the work of the early community's *ressentiment* toward and thirst for revenge against their perceived aggressors: a Divine Jesus, they threatened, would soon return to judge and inflict endless torment on his enemies (ibid.; see also A 34 and GM I 15).

This is how early (anti-)Christian hatred trumped Jesus's message of love. "At bottom there was but one Christian," Nietzsche provocatively declares, "and he died on the cross" (A 39). With Jesus's last breath, his Buddhistic message of peace collapsed into Death Eternal; from the ashes arose its perfect opposite.

1.4 Pauline Christianity as anarchism

According to Nietzsche, early Christians took a page from the Jewish book in de-Buddhicizing Jesus's peace movement and making him God and Ultimate Judge. And it was Paul, Nietzsche reports, who had the genius of steering the early Christians' thirst for revenge into the true and tested channels of Judaic moral transvaluation (A 44). Pauline Christianity is thus, Nietzsche sarcastically claims in the language of the (Neo-)Hegelian, the "rational outcome" of the "Jewish instinct" (A 24), albeit one which "denied even the last form of reality,

the 'holy people,' the 'chosen people,' *Jewish* reality itself" and is in this sense thoroughly *anarchic* (A 27). This calls for some explication.

As Nietzsche explains in GM, the Jews' brilliant post-exilic invention of a single, universal, cosmopolitan God and with him of a "moral world-order" was the first genuinely *creative* outcome of *ressentiment* in world history (I 10). Yahweh, like the national God of any powerful, self-affirming people in antiquity, was initially "the expression of Israel's consciousness of power, of its joy over itself, of its hope for itself" (A 25). After centuries of defeat and humiliation, however, the Jewish priestly classes that had grown to dominance during the post-exilic Second Temple Period radically transformed the figure of Yahweh. Most importantly, he ceased to be an immanent, national God—that is, to be one with his nation, or an expression of Israel's pride and confidence—and became instead a transcendent, universal God (ibid.).[6] Israel's history, moreover, was rewritten and profoundly falsified: God had given his people moral commands, then punished them for their transgressions, and finally thrown them into exile. It is at this juncture that the concept of "sin" was invented, and with it that of a "moral world-order" (A 26).

From then on, rather than being an expression of kingship, power, courage, sovereignty, ascendance, and health, the idea of God would be mobilized to condemn all such values as "worldly" and thus "sinful." Goodness would henceforth consist in submissiveness, meekness, weakness, poverty, and ill-health (A 26; see also GM I 8–9). This, for Nietzsche, represents a complete inversion of the "natural" relationship to the divine: up till this point, a people's celebration of their god was a *consequence* of their worldly success; henceforth, a universal God would be the *cause* of a people's failure or success, with the highest reward going to those who, for the longest time, would languish in a state of utter dejection (A 25).

In so doing, the Jews had taken counterintuitive, yet effective means of surviving and thriving in the most hostile of contexts. They were afforded a sense of pride and an identity in spite of their lack of political sovereignty—something previously inconceivable in the ancient world—and, should their highly seductive system of valuation spread among their masters' other subjects and eventually among their masters themselves, their enemies were certain to be diminished. Nietzsche thus describes the Jews as "the opposite of all *décadents*, though they have been forced to act like them to the point of illusion" (A 24) and as possessed of "the most tenacious will to live that has ever existed on earth" (A 27). Indeed, the Jewish priesthood invented *décadent*, nihilist values, but they

did so in the context of a struggle for survival and self-affirmation. The Jews, then, are the very opposite of nihilists. Having said this, it is precisely in the role of the most ferocious anti-nihilists that they actively promote nihilist values.

On Nietzsche's reading, then, in so far as the arch-Jewish, arch-priestly Paul's Judaicization of Christianity represents the embrace of a *total nihilism*, Pauline Christianity is actually *anti-Jewish* (A 44).[7] With Paul at their helm, the early Christians employed the methods of Jewish falsification in turning their immanent master into a transcendent God—exactly as the Jews had done with Yahweh—and in reinterpreting the practical "way of life" which he had preached as a doctrine centered on the notions of moral obligation, transgression, guilt, and repentance—much as the Jews had "moralized" their initially highly practical, this-worldly cult (ibid.). What is more, Pauline Christianity embraces the *ressentiment*-fueled, inverted moral framework that the Jews had given birth to—the last will be first, and the first last; the lowly, sick, dispossessed, meek, and humble are the "chosen people" who will be saved, while the healthy and mighty are the "evil ones" who will be damned (ibid.). In sharp contrast to the Jews, however, Pauline Christians lack national sentiment, do not dream of political sovereignty on a particular territory on this earth and in historical time—in fact, they regard not a single thing from "this world" as in any way good, save repentance from worldliness itself (A 15; see also A 43). Instead, they invest all of their hopes in "the other world," which, tellingly, is said to come only after the destruction of this one (A 58). If the Jewish heart's true desire is the survival and flourishing of its people and kin, that of the Christian is none other than the "will to the end" (A 9). In this sense, in being *über*-Jewish, Pauline Christianity turns out to be anti-Jewish. Rather than expressing a calculating will to live, as Judaism does, Pauline Christianity expresses an uncompromisingly anarchic will to self- and world-destruction. Unlike the Jew, the Christian does not just play the role of the *décadent*, life-negating type; he is a sincere nihilist, a life-destroying anarchist (A 27; see also A 44 and 58).

This is how we arrive at the Christianity that Nietzsche compares to Buddhism at *The Antichrist* 20–23. As a further development and vertiginous expansion of Jewish *ressentiment*, Pauline Christianity is so profoundly ruled by the *décadent* "instinctive hatred of reality" that it can do little more than pay lip-service to the *décadents'* opposed instinct of "exclusion of aversion and hostility." It is ultimately as Judaism squared, then, that Christianity turns from an apolitical Buddhistic religion of love to an anarchic Semitic religion of hatred.

1.5 Manu's "Holy Lies" versus Christianity's perverse untruths

Toward the end of *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche provides a brief overview of the orthodox Brāhmaṇical social philosophy presented in the *Manusmṛti*[8] so as to show that it represents a life-affirming ideology that is the antipode of the life-negating Pauline Christian (A 56–58). It is ultimately in contrasting Christianity to this strand of Brāhmaṇism, Nietzsche claims, that we can understand what it is that Christianity seeks to destroy, but also point the way toward a genuine alternative to Christian life-negation.

The legendary sage Manu's religious legislation, Nietzsche tells us, is underpinned by values that are the contrary of the Christian's. Thus, Manu's entire teaching is founded on respect for what is creative, affirmative, noble, and high-minded in mankind. Together with a purported understanding of the conditions required for such values to thrive, namely strict social hierarchy and various institutionalized forms of the "pathos of distance" (A 57), this is what makes Manu's Brāhmaṇism the polar opposite of Christian anarchism (A 58; see also TI "Improvers" 3–5).

What is perhaps most significant about Nietzsche's discussion in this section of *The Antichrist* is that Nietzsche does not regard Manu's teaching as more truthful than that of Paul's Christ. The Brāhmins lie no less than Christian (or Jewish) priests—their religious legislation "eternalizes" what are really the products of a dynamic history of contestation and "experimentation," and, like all "holy lies," it seeks to render unconscious and spontaneous what is really the outcome of choices by making such highly artificial structures as the caste system seem "natural" (A 57). But this, for Nietzsche, is no objection to their project.[9] What matters, for Nietzsche, is that the Brāhmins' holy lies, unlike their Christian peers,' serve "life-promoting" as opposed to "life-depleting" ends. Nietzsche explains, "Ultimately it is a matter of the end to which a lie is being told. That in Christianity the 'holy' end is absent is my objection to its means" (A 56; see also the opening lines of A 58). For all of Nietzsche's complaints against the falsification at work in the Jewish and Christian imaginary, his discussion of the *Manusmṛti* makes it obvious that his real objections to Christian lies are the life-negating, socially disruptive ends they serve. Life-affirming lies such as the orthodox Brāhmins' are not merely acceptable by virtue of the ends they serve, they are psychologically, socially, and politically necessary. In order for life-affirming social mores to be fully internalized and spontaneously followed, humans must be made to forget that they are the products of history, and it is the role of genuinely "holy" religious legislators to make certain that such forgetting takes place.

2 Commentary

In the second part of this chapter, I present my interpretation of comparative religion in *The Antichrist* by means of a three-part commentary. I first argue that Nietzsche's comparativist discussion was intended as a pastiche of a then-prevalent genre of discourse on religion, especially Christianity. I then discuss the ways in which Nietzsche's account is meant to subvert Schopenhauer's comparativist doctrines. In the final section of my commentary, I argue that comparative religion ought to be understood as a cultural intervention.

2.1 A methodological pastiche

Nietzsche's comparativist account, I submit, is a satirical pastiche. This implies (1) that it closely follows the conventions of a well-known genre and (2) that there is something ironic, insincere, or deliberately untruthful about the whole exercise. Before I provide my reasons for holding these views, I wish to qualify my claim: Nietzsche's exercise in comparative religion consists of what I call a "methodological pastiche," not a stylistic pastiche, which is by far the more common form of pastiche. Unlike *Zarathustra*, for example, which is a stylistic pastiche of liturgical texts—Biblical and otherwise—Nietzsche's comparativist discussion in *The Antichrist* is, stylistically speaking, quintessentially Nietzschean. The mimicry at play is not of the stylistic features of the comparativist genre, but rather of its method.

What, then, is the method that Nietzsche satirizes in his pastiche? In broad outline, it consists in comparing Christianity to Indian religion with a view to gaining insight into its "essence" and/or the true nature of its relationship to Judaism. It is no exaggeration to say that this approach to comparative religion was one of the major leitmotifs in late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century scholarship and philosophy. Voltaire, Herder, Schlegel, Schopenhauer, Renan, and Havet all partook in the exercise of turning to Indian religion with a view to setting the record straight on Christianity's genuine character and relationship to the older Semitic creed.[10] The notion of a Buddhistic Jesus, in particular, figures prominently in the writings of Schopenhauer, Wagner, Renan, and Havet, always in conjunction with the claim that "true Christianity" owes little to nothing of substance to the Jewish tradition. Nietzsche's comparativist claims in *The Antichrist* paint a very different picture as compared to his predecessors' accounts, but these claims in *The Antichrist* are of the same kind—in the formal,

as opposed to substantive, sense of "kind"—as those of these widely read forerunners. The method he employs is resolutely unoriginal, and intentionally so.

Let us consider, in this connection, Schopenhauer's core teachings concerning the relationship between Judeo-Christian and Indian religions. Schopenhauer's, after all, was by far the most influential account of this kind in late-nineteenth-century Europe. It is also the primary target of Nietzsche's methodological pastiche.

The Buddha, Schopenhauer argues in his later work,[11] gave the clearest and most truthful formulation of the basic insight at the heart of all true religion. In recognizing that nonexistence is preferable to existence, the Buddha's religion was one of lucid pessimism and ethically forthright "denial of the will," bereft of the theistic garb and mytho-poetic trappings in which the truths of pessimism manifest themselves elsewhere, both in India's Brāhmaṇical traditions and further West (*WWV II*, Book L, p. 698; *PP II* §116). What is more, Schopenhauer regarded European Christianity as a thoroughly incoherent hybrid: its truthful "core" is pure Buddhistic pessimism, but this core is occluded and defiled by the foolish Jewish optimism or "affirmation of the will" in which it is wrapped up. Thanks to the discovery of India and its "superior religions," Schopenhauer claims, Europeans at last have the opportunity to recognize the true Buddhist nature of genuine Christianity and salvage their noble Aryan creed from the degeneration it has suffered as a result of Semitic-optimist corruption (*WWV II*, Book XLIV, p. 623).

The structural affinity between Schopenhauer's account and Nietzsche's seemingly rival account is striking. But why, one may ask, regard Nietzsche's comparativist discussion as a satirical pastiche of Schopenhauer's discourse, as opposed to a sincere rival account? I support my case on three pieces of evidence.

At GS 99 Nietzsche ridicules Schopenhauer's devotees (and especially Wagner) for following their master's cue in, among other things, their "attempt to conceive of Christianity as a seed of Buddhism that has drifted far away." Did Nietzsche later change his mind and decide that Schopenhauer, in the end, was correct about this matter, as his claims in *The Antichrist* appear to suggest? This question must be answered in the negative. As becomes evident under closer analysis, Nietzsche just plays the Schopenhauerean game without taking its rules seriously.

To wit: the Buddhistic Jesus of *The Antichrist* is at odds with the way Nietzsche describes Jesus in all of his other writing. In GS, it is Jesus, not Paul, who identifies the cause of suffering as "sin" (138) (an idea which Jesus could

not even have conceived on the account presented in *The Antichrist*), fails to challenge the erroneous idea of God as Judge (140), and presents himself as a bridge between Heaven and Earth (137) (a dichotomy the Jesus of *The Antichrist* entirely overcomes); in BGE, it is Jesus (not Paul, again) who is the anarchist (164) and the vindictive inventor of hell (269); and in GM, finally, it is Jesus (not Paul) who preaches the Jewish values of hatred for the powerful (I 8). Verily, the Buddhistic, *ressentiment*-transcending Jesus of *The Antichrist* is an anomaly in the entire Nietzsche corpus.[12] Contrary to what many have assumed,[13] *The Antichrist* does not convey Nietzsche's "true opinion" of the "historical" Jesus, but, on the contrary, a thoroughly artificial view designed to serve the specific purpose of satirizing Schopenhauer, Wagner, Renan, and others.

Finally, Nietzsche's generally positive attitude to Buddhism in *The Antichrist* contrasts sharply with his highly critical appraisal of the tradition in a number of other late texts.[14] Most notably, Nietzsche directly contradicts *The Antichrist* 20's claim that Buddhism "stands *beyond good and evil*" in BGE, where he writes that the Buddha remained "under the spell and delusion of morality" (56). Together with the other passages on Buddhism in Nietzsche's writing that contradict his claims in *The Antichrist* (see GM II 21; *PF 1885–1887* 2[127]; and *PF 1887–1888* 9[35], 9[60], and 10[190]), this suggests that A's depiction of Buddhism ought not to be taken at face value, which in turn suggests that Nietzsche's broader claims about religion in this text are not as sincere as they may seem.

In light of all of the above, it stands to reason that Nietzsche's comparativist account in *The Antichrist* ought to be taken with a grain, if not a generous pinch, of salt. More specifically, it ought to be read as a pastiche of Schopenhauerian comparativism—a type of *performance* that aims to elicit certain responses from its target audience—not as the expression of Nietzsche's "considered opinions" on the matters at hand.

2.2 Subverting Schopenhauer

The next step in my commentary hones in on the ways in which Nietzsche seeks to subvert the Schopenhauerean account in *The Antichrist*. Nietzsche's subversion of Schopenhauer (and, by extension, of his numerous followers in late-nineteenth-century Europe) operates at three principal levels. I examine each of these in turn in the paragraphs that follow.

1. *Christianity, Judaism, and Schopenhauer's (confused) self-understanding.*
   Like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche presents "real-world" Christianity as the

result of genuine, Buddhistic Christianity's Judaicization/corruption. But the overlap ends there. The story Nietzsche tells in *The Antichrist* is considerably more complicated than Schopenhauer's, and each of its key steps significantly challenges his predecessors' version. First, Nietzsche interprets turn of the era Judaism not simply as an "optimistic" religion—as Schopenhauer had it—but rather as a religion of cunning life- and self-affirmation, in which life-negating *décadent* values are promoted for strictly tactical purposes. Second, *contra* Schopenhauer Nietzsche interprets Jesus's original message not as a forerunner of Schopenhauer's pessimism—that is, as expressive of a *ressentiment*-fueled desire for world-destruction—but as something far less offensive, namely as a "way of life" oriented only toward private life-negation, as it were. Third, for Nietzsche the Judaicization of Christianity results not in a hybrid product amenable to a simplistic core/shell analysis (as Schopenhauer had it), but rather in a somewhat baffling inversion of both initial elements. As *über*-Jewish anarchism, Pauline Christianity is both anti-Buddhist and anti-Jewish: it is anti-Buddhist because it has turned into a religion of hatred, *ressentiment*, and world-destruction that represents a complete inversion of the Buddha's and Jesus's "peace movement"; and it is anti-Jewish because it is no longer tactically, but wholeheartedly *décadent* and life-hating—that is, it is no longer the expression of a people's or community's suppressed desire for health and thriving, but gives voice instead to a thoroughly internationalist desire for the annihilation of all life. In satirizing, refining, and subverting Schopenhauer's comparativist account, then, Nietzsche shows us that Schopenhauer was in fact—contrary to what he took himself to be—not Buddhist, but *über*-Jewish (or Christian) and thus anti-Buddhist. To wit: his version of pessimism is heir, not to Buddhism, but to the most profoundly Judaic or *ressentiment*-fueled and thus anti-Buddhist elements of (Pauline) Christianity. This represents a profound and damaging subversion of Schopenhauer's philosophy of religion and, perhaps more importantly, of Schopenhauer's self-understanding.

2. *Original Christianity, Buddhism, and the nature of their "Truth."* Nietzsche mimics Schopenhauer in claiming that the original Christian teaching is a form of Buddhism. But whereas Schopenhauer proclaimed that the Buddhist core at the heart of genuine Christianity consists of insight into the Universal Truth that this life of suffering is pointless, meaningless, and fundamentally undesirable, Nietzsche claims instead that the purported

insights that form the Buddhistic core of (original) Christianity are merely expressive of psycho-physiological decay. More specifically, Nietzsche playfully concedes to Schopenhauer that both the Buddha's teachings and Jesus's *εὐαγγέλιον* are "truthful," but adds an important nuance. It is true that for people too exhausted to engage the world, certain "hygienic" physical and psychological measures should be adopted to dull the pain and "feel eternal." And it is true that people who adopt these measures and transcend all hostility will "feel eternal"—this feeling is a "true" experience in that it denotes a real psycho-physiological experience. These "truths," however, by no means imply that—as Schopenhauer thought he, the Buddha, and Jesus had correctly understood—retreating from all forms of engagement with and struggle in the world is the most appropriate response to life's challenges for all humans at all times. The Buddha's and Jesus's "truth" is only a *décadent*'s truth, a truth from the perspective of life in decline. Belief in such a "truth" is appropriate, even "warranted" (as today's epistemologists would say), for those too weak to engage reality and embrace the struggles that this implies, but to present it as a "one-size-fits-all" practical orientation to life and its challenges is both erroneous (in that there are other, radically different, yet equally suitable perspectival/contextual "truths") and dangerous (in that to insist that this is the Universal Truth is to foreclose the more active forms of engagement in the world on which societal and cultural thriving depends). In short, in playing the game of presenting (original) "Christianity as a seed of Buddhism that has drifted far away" (GS 99), it is as though Nietzsche ceded Schopenhauer his bounty with one hand, while dramatically reducing its cash value with the other. Yes, Christ and the Buddha stand for the same thing, and so, yes, the two are "truthful" in the same sense, yet both were but prophets of their type's highly idiosyncratic truths, namely the weak, exhausted type—not model, but counter-model for those who may be capable of flourishing in this world and making this world flourish.

3. *Schopenhauer's "Oriental Renaissance" turned upside down.* Nietzsche's claims concerning both Buddhism and Brāhmaṇism in *The Antichrist* give the impression that he agrees with Schopenhauer that Indian religion is superior to European religion. Toward the end of *The Antichrist* Nietzsche also follows Schopenhauer's example in presenting a particular Indian tradition as exemplary of what sound religion involves at its best, the implication being that a "redemption of Europe" of sorts will finally be

made possible through the rediscovery of ancient Indian wisdom. Here, Nietzsche is employing the frequently employed trope of the "Oriental Renaissance." The idea of the Oriental Renaissance was that Europe would eventually come to be as profoundly transformed by its rediscovery of Indian religion as it had been by the rediscovery of Greek science and philosophy a few centuries earlier. This notion first came to the fore in the context of German romanticism's so-called Indomania (the German romantic Majer, an early acquaintance of Schopenhauer's, was among the most vocal proponents of an Oriental Renaissance) and it also figures prominently in Schopenhauer's account of the cultural and philosophical significance of Europe's encounter with Indian thought and religion (Gérard 1963). Nietzsche's version of the Oriental Renaissance myth, however, stands Schopenhauer's version squarely on its head. Nietzsche's claim is that the Indian religious tradition that ought to serve as the guiding light in Europe's regeneration is not, as it was for Schopenhauer, "honest," life-negating, and difference-/distance-transcending Buddhism, but rather the untruthful, life-affirming, and difference-/distance-reinforcing ideology of the *Manusmṛti*, that is, the tradition which stands at the opposite end of the Indian spectrum, relative to Buddhism (as well as equally "nihilistic" or mystical forms of Brāhmaṇism, for example, the Advaita-Vedānta tradition that so exercised the minds of such influential late-nineteenth-century Indologists as Max Müller and Nietzsche's friend, Paul Deussen). A double inversion of Schopenhauer's account is at work here, then. First, it is from the Indian religion of life-affirmation that Europe ought to learn, not from that of life-negation. Second, Europe will be saved not by following the example of the religion that speaks plain truths ("your suffering is your fault and your responsibility"; "if you follows these steps you will bring suffering to cessation"), but by following the example of the religion that lies to its followers in the right way (by "eternalizing" artificial social measures, effectively transfiguring these into "natural" or "revealed" laws) and for the right reasons (to create the kind of hierarchic society on which cultural vitality depends). To Schopenhauer's claim that life is evil and that the Buddha should be praised for understanding this, Nietzsche here replies that life is good and that Manu should be praised for understanding *this*; in response to Schopenhauer's praise of the Buddha's "honesty" as compared to other religious teachers, Nietzsche counters that it is Manu who should be praised for understanding, that, as Nietzsche elsewhere states, "*untruth*

is the condition of life" (BGE 4). For Schopenhauer as for Nietzsche, the hopes of an Oriental Renaissance crystallize around an idealized Indian sage, but Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's ideal sages are inverse images of one another. And while Schopenhauer is, like the Buddha, perfectly sincere, Nietzsche is merely engaged in a subversive performance, creatively knitting, like Manu, his own web of "holy lies" in the service of life.

2.3 Comparative religion in *The Antichrist* as cultural intervention

If comparative religion in *The Antichrist* is, as I have argued, a methodological pastiche designed thoroughly to subvert Schopenhauer's highly influential variation on the time-worn theme of the Judeo-Christian religion's relation to the Indian, then it follows that it should be neither regarded nor appraised as the result of a scholarly endeavor or a disinterested quest after "truth." My claim is that it should instead be read as a cultural intervention.

Nietzsche's strategy is to undermine and subvert certain Schopenhauerean ideas by employing and redeploying exactly those tropes that gave such ideas their power. Nietzsche rightly recognized that these ideas were formidably influential in late-nineteenth-century Continental Europe. He also regarded Schopenhauer's cultural heritage as profoundly dangerous. Hence his attempt at subverting him, not by means of argumentation—which he had good reasons to think would be futile—but by means of a playful performance. As situation-bound cultural intervention, comparative religion in *The Antichrist* is comparative religion done from what Nietzsche elsewhere calls "the optics of life" (BT "Preface" 6)—as such, it is partial, it is biased, it is "untruthful," and it derives its true meaning only from the context of the battle in which it is engaged.

Nietzsche's writing in *The Antichrist* suggests that he was in fact simultaneously engaged in a number of separate anti-Schopenhauerean battles. Nietzsche seeks to (a) combat the cultural after-effects of Schopenhauer's preference for "pessimist" religions and correlative condemnation of "life-promoting" traditions; (b) divorce Schopenhauer's rabid and hateful pessimism from Buddhism's milder and nobler version thereof; (c) disclose the disreputable and highly contingent psycho-physiological and cultural conditions out of which emerged the nihilist values Schopenhauer depicts as universal and timeless; and (d) challenge and disrupt the Schopenhauerean valuation of truth and honesty (here embodied in the figure of the Buddha) as necessarily preferable to untruth and ruse (here embodied in the counter-model of Manu). These themes have all been touched

upon above, and they are also discussed at length elsewhere in Nietzsche scholarship. In the present context, I wish instead to call attention to another, less frequently discussed front in Nietzsche's struggle against Schopenhauereanism.

It is important to recall, in this connection, that Nietzsche considered Christian, arch-nationalist anti-Semites to be the lowest of the low (GM III 26; BGE 215; *PF 1888* 14[182]). And Nietzsche, of course, was well aware that many such folk reveled in Schopenhauer's writings and in the works of other anti-Semitic writers (most prominently Wagner) who, in the manner of Schopenhauer, sought to dissociate Christianity from Judaism while in the same breath associating it to the purportedly "pure" Aryan religion of Buddhism. To this crowd *The Antichrist* delivers an emphatic message:

> Your Christian religion, ladies and gentlemen, is predicated on the stupidity of taking seriously what the Jews only made intelligent instrumental use of, namely nihilist, world-hating values. There is nothing Buddhist or Aryan about you. You Christian Anti-Semites are in fact *more* Jewish than the Jews themselves, only too stupid to realize it. What is more, the Jews didn't kill your supposedly Buddhistic Jesus—you killed him! And what did you replace him with? Well now, none other than the effigy of an *über*-Jewish preacher!

Such, I claim, is Nietzsche's attack on anti-Semitism in *The Antichrist.*[15] The tactic at work here is an odd admixture of "pulling the carpet from under the opponent's feet" and "turning the tables on the adversary." But categorizing it is arguably futile; it appears to be a uniquely Nietzschean approach to philosophy as cultural intervention, with all the strengths, weaknesses, and risks that this implies.

3 Concluding remarks: Nietzsche's standing as a philosopher

If Nietzsche's foray into comparative religion in *The Antichrist* is indeed a subversive cultural intervention as opposed to a disinterested scholarly historical exercise or a philosophical quest for "truth," then it might rightly be questioned whether this work has any intrinsic philosophical or historical value at all. More generally, if the author of *The Antichrist* is as insincere as I depict him to be, does he really deserve the title of "philosopher" to begin with? In keeping with his call for a historical turn in philosophy (HH 2), Nietzsche is often described by contemporary commentators as a "historicizing philosopher" (Foucault 1971; Geuss 1999; Williams 2002). And it certainly seems as though "historicizing philosophy" is precisely what Nietzsche attempts to do in *The Antichrist*. But

some may argue, citing my results in support of their view, that in trying to be philosopher and a historian all at once, Nietzsche ends up being neither and producing work that is of no interest to either historians or philosophers.

Consider the two horns of the following dilemma. If Nietzsche's "historical turn" is taken to imply that he ought first and foremost to be regarded as a historian, then to evaluate him we must determine the degree to which he is committed to and applies such principles of sound historical practice as preoccupation with factuality and the accumulation of strong evidence from the greatest variety of sources in support of all of his claims. By this measure, Nietzsche surely fails—the history he does in *The Antichrist* and elsewhere is, even on the most charitable of mainstream standards, bad history. If, notwithstanding his professed historical turn, one chooses instead to focus on the so-called philosophical merits of Nietzsche's work, then it would seem that Nietzsche's total disregard for soundness and grounding—his total disregard for *truth* and *truthfulness*—in *The Antichrist* and elsewhere implies that he is not really engaged in philosophy to begin with, but in something *pre*-philosophical like storytelling or strictly rhetorical composition. "Historicizing philosophy" as Nietzsche practices it, then, seems to fail on both counts—it seems to be a nonviable, ill-bred chimera.

This is not the place to make a case for why Nietzsche's critique of objectivity matters to both historians and philosophers, but interpretive charity demands that an attempt at least be made to dig him out of the pit. The first thing to note is that Nietzsche deliberately bases such accounts as his comparative religion in *The Antichrist* on "bad" historical practice. His treatment of all major religious traditions is fundamentally and voluntarily unhistorical or ahistorical. Nietzsche deliberately "eternalizes" or "universalizes" (in the manner of Manu) certain aspects of each religious tradition as well as the relations between said traditions. And this is the direct consequence of the axiological "biases" he brings to the table. Nietzsche, of course, is perfectly aware that this, from a scientific perspective, is terrible method. On Nietzsche's account, however, the methodological commitments historians typically profess and by the lights of which his account might be deemed "bad history" are the product either of bad faith or of culpable ignorance: no historical account is ever non-biased and non-eternalizing. To claim the contrary betrays either hypocrisy or self-deceit. If historians felt strongly enough about "honesty" and "transparency," then they would not disingenuously claim to be "objective," but should instead be fully transparent about their biases and the way these affect their work. Perspectives, after all, must fully be "owned" to yield the specific "grasp on reality" that they afford.

Fully adopting a perspective, however, comes at a cost for not only "truth" and "fairness" (HH "Preface" [1886] 1 and 6), but also historicity (UM II 10; BGE 224).

The question of "perspective" links up naturally to the domain of the philosophical. According to Nietzsche, "wisdom" involves the ability to consider, weigh, incorporate, and order the greatest variety of perspectives stemming from as many different axiological angles as possible (HH "Preface" 6; GS 382; GM III 12). The standard philosophical ideal of striving to contemplate reality disinterestedly or "from the perspective of no-perspective," Nietzsche regards as incoherent (a "view from nowhere" is no *view* at all; GM III 12), ethically perverse (universalizing the drive to impersonality as the nec plus ultra of epistemological virtue is to say "No!" to life; BGE 207), and either disingenuous or delusional (whether they realized it or not, all philosophers have really just been autobiographers; BGE 6). Nietzsche, then, is as little interested in being a "good historian" as he is in being a "good philosopher" as the term is commonly understood.

Nietzsche is quite clear about this: "Philosophers of the future" like him will be *Versucher*, which is to say "experimenters," but also, at the same time, "tempters" (BGE 42). By this Nietzsche means that the new philosopher's "truths" will be free creations—the results of creative and thus deeply personal experimentation (BGE 43)—designed to have a kind of *appeal* or *compellingness* that cannot be reduced to their "objective" or "view from nowhere" veracity. A's philosophical-*cum*-historical pastiche of comparative religion *qua* cultural intervention is, as I see it, exactly the kind of philosophical experiment and seduction Nietzsche envisions and calls for in BGE. To the extent that it is at all "truthful," it gives expression to a type of "truth" that is radically different to the Platonic or the scientific. Whatever one might think of his qualities as a historian or as a philosopher, then, it cannot be denied that, as far as method is concerned, Nietzsche is impeccably coherent, consequent, and transparent or, in a word, honest.

Notes

1 All translations in this chapter are my own. For the sake of brevity, I cite only the text number, not the full *KSA* reference. All emphases are Nietzsche's.

2 Thus, at *TI* "Socrates" 4 Nietzsche explains that Socrates' *décadence* is given away by the "anarchy of his instincts," while at *The Antichrist* 31 he notes that, as a *décadent* type, Jesus was in all likelihood a "curious multiplicity and contradictoriness."

3 On Nietzsche's idea of what he calls "great love" at GM II 24 (and elsewhere), see also BGE 201 and 260, GS 345 and 377, and GM III 23.

4 This, I would argue, is an important aspect of what Nietzsche's speculations on "the world as will to power" involve as regards psychology, broadly construed. In the interest of focus and brevity, in this chapter I choose to tiptoe my way around the many difficult questions that arise in connection to the interpretation of the "will to power" teaching.

5 Nietzsche's principal sources for his comments on Buddhism in *The Antichrist* are Koeppen (1857), Oldenberg (1881), Müller (1879), but perhaps above all Kern (1882). It is Kern, after all, who most strongly stresses early Buddhism's (qualified) atheism and explicitly therapeutic or "hygienic" orientation.

6 As a number of scholars have noted (Santaniello 1994; Murphy 2001; Jaggard 2013), Nietzsche draws heavily from Wellhausen 1878 here.

7 This twist in the story Nietzsche tells in *The Antichrist* should not be confused with Nietzsche's account of Paul's conversion to Christianity as an anarchic rejection of Jewish law and its over-demandingness at D 68. In this text, Paul's transformation is described not as politically, but rather as psychologically, motivated: Paul sought refuge in Christ because he could no longer bear the tyranny of Jewish law and the self-inflicted pressure he suffered as a consequence of his perfectionism. And while Paul is here described as "*the first Christian*," nothing in this text suggests that he is the founder of an in fact anti-Christian Christianity. Instead, he is merely described as the first person fully to understand what Christianity could do for anyone who experienced worldly law as a problem. Cf. Acampora, who misleadingly merges the accounts provided by Nietzsche in D and *The Antichrist* in her discussion of Paul (2013: 116–20).

8 Nietzsche's source is L. Jacolliot's (deeply flawed) translation of this text in *Les législateurs religieux: Manou. Moïse. Mahomet* (1876), which Nietzsche acquired and studied in the first half of 1888.

9 Cf. Young's confused interpretation of Nietzsche's assessment of Manu, which has it that Nietzsche was critical of Manu for telling "holy lies" (which runs squarely contrary to the entire spirit of A 56–58) and fails to notice that Nietzsche is in fact paraphrasing, not endorsing, the *Manusmṛti* when he speaks of social hierarchy as something "natural" (2006: 187–89).

10 For an excellent survey of most of these authors' engagement with India, see Halbfass 1988, Chs. 4–8.

11 Schopenhauer had very limited knowledge of Buddhism in the earlier phases of his writing career (i.e., between roughly 1813 and 1842), for the simple reason that Europeans knew practically nothing of this important Indian tradition until Étienne Burnouf's seminal work on early Indian Buddhism appeared in the 1830s. In his later writing (between 1842 and 1859), however, Schopenhauer repeatedly

refers to Buddhism, a religion for which his admiration apparently knew no bounds. This is made obvious by his numerous comments on Buddhism in *Parerga und Paralipomena* (henceforth *PP*) (1851) and the third edition of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (henceforth *WWV*) *I und II* (1859). Note that it is this last edition of the work that I cite in this chapter.

12 My detractors will point to HH 475, where Nietzsche describes Christ as "the noblest human being." First, whatever Nietzsche meant by "noble" back in 1878, we can be certain that it has nothing to do with "freedom from *ressentiment*"—a conception of nobility that only appears in Nietzsche's latest-most work. Second, the rhetorical context is important here as well: Nietzsche is taking a jab at anti-Semites, insisting that they show more respect toward that people among whom such exemplary figures as Jesus and Spinoza arose. As such, HH's statement to the effect that Jesus was the "noblest human being" might also be tactical, rather than the expression of Nietzsche's true feelings.

13 These include such Anglo-American commentators as Kaufmann (1974), Acampora (2013), and Jaggard (2013), such "Continental" commentators as Biser (1981), Natoli (1985), and Makarushka (1994), as well as the influential contemporary American theologian Altizer (1997). Rare exceptions include Murphy (2001) and Detering (2010), both of whom, each in their own way, appreciate the satirical character of Nietzsche's discourse in *The Antichrist*.

14 This is something none of the major commentators who have turned their attention to Nietzsche's relationship to Buddhism (Mistry 1981; Droit 1989; Morrison 1999; and Panaïoti 2013) have failed to notice.

15 Yovel (1994) arrives at a similar conclusion. In his view, Nietzsche may be characterized as anti-Antisemitic, even though he ought also to be regarded as being anti-Judaic. My reading is further supported by Nietzsche's description of the hoped-for political effects of the A's publication in his somewhat manic December 1888 (draft) letter to Georg Brandes (KSB 8:1170). One of his goals in publishing this text was ostensibly to gain the moral and financial support of the wealthy North-American and European Jewry in his struggle against the so-called "Party of Christianity."

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4

Nietzsche's Antichristian Ethics: Renaissance *Virtù* and the Project of Reevaluation

David Owen

In the opening sections of *The Antichrist: A Curse on Christianity*, Nietzsche provides a revealing summary not only on his concerns in this work but also on his understanding of his overall project. This is succinctly stated in s.3:

> The problem I raise here is not what ought to succeed mankind in the sequence of species (the human being is a *conclusion*): but what type of human being one ought to *breed*, ought to *will*, as more valuable, more worthy of life, more certain of the future.
>
> This more valuable type has existed often enough already: but as a lucky accident, as an exception, never as *willed*. He has rather been the most feared, he has hitherto been virtually *the* thing to be feared—and out of fear the reverse type has been willed, bred, *achieved*: the domestic animal, the herd animal, the sick animal man—the Christian. (A 3)

In the preceding section, Nietzsche identifies the evaluative contrasts that he draws here in terms of his understanding of human being in terms of will to power:

> What is good?—Everything that enhances people's feeling of power, will to power, power itself.
>
> What is bad?—Everything stemming from weakness.
>
> What is happiness?—The feeling that power is *growing*, that some resistance has been overcome.
>
> *Not* contentedness, but more power; *not* peace, but war; *not* virtue, but prowess (virtue in the style of the Renaissance, *virtù*, moraline-free virtue).

> The weak and the failures should perish: first principle of our love of humanity. And they should be helped to do this.
> What is more harmful than any vice?—Active pity for all failures and weakness—Christianity. (A 2)

In this chapter, my focus is on how we are to understand the problem and project that Nietzsche identifies as defining his philosophical enterprise and to do so by focusing quite specifically on his appeal to the idea of "virtue in the style of the Renaissance, *virtù*, moraline-free virtue." This focus is motivated in large part by my sense that Nietzsche's appeal to the Renaissance idea of *virtù* is grounded in his own commitment to realism in ethics and politics. Thus, for example, in TI, Nietzsche draws a contrast between Platonic idealism and Thucydidean realism, and announces his own allegiance: "Thucydides, and perhaps Machiavelli's *principe*, are most closely related to me through their absolute will not to fool themselves and to see reason in *reality—not* in 'reason', still less in 'morality'" (TI "What I owe to the ancients" 2). My aim in this chapter is, through the focus on *virtù,* to draw out the implications of this commitment for Nietzsche's project as he articulates it in *The Antichrist*.

I'll start by attempting to clarify the terms of the problem that Nietzsche poses and the project he proposes, before turning to explore the Renaissance concept of *virtù* to which he appeals in the context of his stress on will to power—and I'll do this by focusing on Machiavelli as the exemplary Renaissance theorist of *virtù* and as the Renaissance thinker with whom Nietzsche most closely associates himself. I'll then turn back to Nietzsche's project and try to show how this focus on *virtù* can help to illuminate it and to provide guidance on Nietzsche's project and ethical outlook.

1 The problem and project

Nietzsche's problem is the classical question concerning the form of the good life: "What is noble?" It is to address this problem that he articulates the doctrine of will to power and the idea of *decadence* as the paradoxical form of will to power directed against itself that he finds expressed in Christianity as a reevaluation of values. Much of *The Antichrist* is concerned with providing a genealogy of Christianity as an ethical orientation and an historical institution in which its

emergence and development is translated back into what we may call "natural history," that is, a naturalistic account of the history of human conduct that seeks as far as possible to account for Christianity's ethical orientation and its emergence and development as an historical institution in terms drawn from human psychology that do not presuppose moral concepts internal to this orientation.

The importance of Christianity for Nietzsche is twofold. First, as an ethical orientation, it represents an evaluative ranking of values that is the target of his critical focus. Second, as a historical institution that has, for the most part, established this evaluative ranking of values as the hegemonic ordering of values in European ethical culture, it represents an example of a successful reevaluation of values that can be understood as having "willed, bred, *achieved*" the widespread cultivation of a particular type of human being. Together these two features define the scope of Nietzsche's own project, namely, to (*re-) found* an ethical culture oriented to noble values through a reevaluation of Christianity as an ethical orientation and the constitution of a community of "free spirits" who displace Christianity as an historical institution. Although the latter is an important issue for Nietzsche's project and one that requires close attention to the rhetorical performances that his texts enact, my focus will be on Nietzsche's reevaluation of Christianity and the alternative ethical orientation that he proposes. In the remainder of this section, I lay out the terms in which Nietzsche takes up this task.

We can begin by noting that the object of evaluation for Nietzsche is an ethical culture, that is, the practical expression of an ethical orientation as a way of life. There are several reasons for this holist approach to the analysis of morality of which I will highlight two that are particularly important for our concerns.

The first is that Nietzsche offers a naturalistic account of human agency in which drives play a fundamental role in shaping the agent's evaluative orientations that is manifest in the structuring of "their perceptions, affects and reflective thought" (Katsafanas 2013: 752). However, drives play this role as drives that have been mediated and shaped by ethical culture. Our drive-complex as given by nature may be characterized by certain biological features that allow some differentiation of drives (e.g., food, sex, aggression) in much the same way as we can speak of animals being characterized by drives expressed in patterned forms of instinctual behavior; however, it is part of the *ethology* of humankind that we are also cultural beings. It is ethical culture embodied

in social practices through which the raw material of our biological drives are shaped and given determinacy in their relations with one another. Nietzsche draws attention to this point early in *Daybreak*:

> *Drives transformed by moral judgments.*—The same drive evolves into the painful feeling of cowardice under the impress of the reproach custom has imposed upon this drive: or into the pleasant feeling of humility if it happens that a custom such as the Christian has taken it to its heart and called it good. That is to say, it is attended by either a good or a bad conscience! In itself it has, *like every drive*, neither this moral character nor any moral character at all, nor even a definite attendant sensation of pleasure or displeasure: it acquires all this, as its second nature, only when it enters into relations with drives already baptised good or evil or is noted as a quality of beings the people has already evaluated and determined in a moral sense. (D 38)

Nietzsche continues in this passage to offer a further range of examples of this phenomenon. Thus, he notes that the ancient Greeks "felt differently about *envy* from the way we do; Hesiod counted it among the effects of the *good*, beneficent Eris" and "likewise differed from us in their evaluation of hope: they felt it to be blind and deceitful," while he claims that the ancient Jews "felt differently about *anger* from the way we do, and called it holy" (D s.38). While our biological drives may constrain the range of possible ethical cultures that humans can instantiate, this constraint still allows for remarkable diversity in ethical cultures and hence in the possible ways in which our drives can be shaped and relationally differentiated from one another. It is these culturally shaped drives that then structure our perceptions, affects, and reflective thought in ways that largely escape our conscious reflection and control.

This view of biological drives as shaped by ethical culture has two important implications. The first is that because our drives are shaped by ethical culture, transformations of ethical culture expressed through social practices reshape our drives and, hence, our evaluative perceptions, affects, and reflective thought. In GS, for example, Nietzsche remarks:

> The true invention of the religion-founders is first to establish a certain way of life and everyday customs that work as a *disciplina voluntatis* while at the same time removing boredom; and then to give just this life an *interpretation* that makes it appear illuminated by the highest worth, so that henceforth it becomes a good for which one fights and under certain circumstances even gives one's life. Actually, the second invention is the more important: the first, the way of

> life, was usually in place, though alongside other ways of life and without any consciousness of its special worth. (GS 353)

Notice that Nietzsche is here stressing two points. First, that an ethical culture is grounded in social practices and, second, that such practices are open to being redescribed (reinterpreted) in ways that transform ethical culture. The work of the religion-founder is that by transforming the terms in which we understand our own activity, our everyday practices, they transform these practices and hence what we are—and this transformation is not merely cognitive but affective and even physiological in the sense that our participation in these reinterpreted practices restructures our drives. In this passage, as in his discussion of the slave revolt in morality (GM I), Nietzsche is representing what is, no doubt, a long and complex social process in its essential psychological terms—and one of the important features of *The Antichrist* is that it offers a more elaborated account of this type of process *and its path-dependencies*. It is important to note further that innovators like the religion-founder or the priests of GM or *The Antichrist* have to work with the materials that are available to them, that is, they have to draw on resources given by the existing ethical culture in order to root their reevaluations within the affective perspectives of their audience and so to mobilize them in the direction of change.

The second reason for Nietzsche's holistic focus on ethical cultures concerns his doctrine of will to power which we can gloss as the claim that human beings are characterized by a freestanding (i.e., nonderivative) drive to express, and experience the expression of, their agency in shaping themselves and their environment. However, as self-conscious beings, our experience of ourselves as agents (the feeling of power) is mediated by the ethical culture that we inhabit. Thus, for example, Nietzsche's example of the religious-founder illustrates the point that a given way of life can be reinterpreted such that those engaged in this way of life experience a greater feeling of power even if what they can do (their power) does not change. The slave revolt in morality addressed in GM I exhibits this feature in its presentation of slaves as driven by their need to experience themselves as agents to endorse both a new view of agency and of what is valuable precisely because it enables their feeling of power. In *The Antichrist* too, Nietzsche's stress on the inability of the existing "prophetic" ethical culture to sustain the feeling of power under conditions of internal conflict and external threat—"anarchy from the inside, Assyrians from the outside" (A 25)—indicates the conditions under which the priests could advance successfully an alternative interpretation of Jewish history and ethical culture:

> But all hopes were left unfulfilled. The old god could not do the things he used to do. He should have been let go. What happened? His concept was *altered*—his concept was *denatured*: this was the price for retaining it. Yahweh, the god of "justice,"—not one with Israel or the expression of a people's self-esteem any more: now just a god, under certain conditions. . . . His concept becomes a tool in the hands of priestly agitators who now interpret all happiness as a reward, all unhappiness as a punishment for disobeying God, for "sins": that most deceitful of all modes of interpretation, the supposed "moral world order," which turns the natural concepts of "cause" and "effect" on their heads once and for all. (A 25)

A similar logic is at play in Nietzsche's account of the crisis of culture exemplified by Socrates in ancient Athens. Nietzsche presents Socrates as "only the most extreme and eye-catching example of what was turning into a universal affliction":

> People had stopped being masters of themselves and the instincts had turned *against* each other. Socrates was fascinating as an extreme case—his awe-inspiring ugliness showed everyone just what he was. Of course, his fascination lay mainly in the fact that he was an answer, a solution, the manifestation of a *cure* for this case. (TI *The Problem of Socrates* 9)

Nietzsche concludes,

> When people need *reason* to act as a tyrant, which was the case with Socrates, the danger cannot be small that something else might start acting as a tyrant. Rationality was seen as the *saviour*, neither Socrates nor his "patients" had any choice about being rational—it was *de rigueur*, it was their *last* resort. The fanaticism with which all of Greek thought threw itself on rationality shows that there was a crisis: people were in danger, they had only one option: be destroyed or—*be absurdly rational*. (TI *The Problem of Socrates* 10)

As with the Jewish case addressed in *The Antichrist*, it is the inability of the extant ethical culture to sustain the accustomed feeling of power of a people that is manifest as a cultural crisis in which the structuring of the drives breaks down and their conflicts are no longer contained that generates the conditions of transformation of ethical culture, that is, reevaluation of values.

The problem that is posed by this phenomenon is that, under such conditions, will to power motivates a reevaluation of values to sustain the feeling of power but that the reevaluation of values that takes place is one

that turns will to power against itself, that is, disconnects the feeling of power from power in a specific sense. I take Nietzsche's stress on the "falsification" wrought by such transformations of ethical culture to be registering this point (see, for example, A 26). To see Nietzsche's argument, it is helpful to turn to a point acutely made by Reginster (2006), namely, that the experience of (the feeling of) power is dependent on the experience of (the feeling of) resistance and hence this doctrine is committed to the apparently paradoxical claim that willing a goal means also willing resistance to achieving this goal. The appearance of paradox is easily dissolved, however, by considering the concept of a challenge. It is of the nature of challenges that, first, they involve overcoming resistances (no resistance, no challenge); second, they must be attainable (if there is no practical possibility of you achieving X, then X is not a challenge); third, that their value is at least partially related to their difficulty (given two challenges distinguished only by their degree of difficulty, the more challenging option is the more valuable); fourth, once a challenge is met (if it is the kind of challenge that can be met finally and does not simply recur in new forms), it is no longer valuable as a challenge. Will to power can thus be characterized as the need to express, and experience the expression of, one's agency through taking up and overcoming challenges, that is, through challenging oneself.

What is crucial for Nietzsche with respect to ethical cultures is not that they, as involving constraints on conduct and a ranking of values, set challenges but rather the *attitude* to challenges, to challenging oneself, that they express. One way to draw out the importance of this point is to note that the doctrine of will to power identifies human flourishing with the ongoing process of setting and overcoming ideals, and thus with ideals as challenges that are immanent to the temporal and spatial order of nature expressed in the history of human culture. Thus, for example, the history of art or of music can be seen as such a process in which artists or musicians take up challenges as ideals immanent to the historically specific practice in which they are engaged, whether in terms of bringing a style to a higher level of expressive realization (Mozart) or transforming style by creating new expressive resources (Beethoven). Moreover, as these examples illustrate, the way in which a challenge as ideal is taken up and overcome (indeed, exactly what the challenge is and what overcoming it amounts to) is not given independently and in advance of the actions through which an agent attempts to address it but rather is realized, when successful, in and through the performance, the exercise of agency. It is just this understanding

of, and attitude to, ideals that Christianity as an ethical culture rejects.[1] For Christianity, the ideal is a transcendent (and, indeed, ultimately unattainable) goal that is given in advance and independently of the agent. Yes, the Christian has to discipline himself, to undertake ascetic practices that enable him to repress erotic and other desires. However, and this is key for Nietzsche, what is expressed by Christianity is a devaluation of human being as will to power, as the will to challenge oneself, to engage in self-overcoming that affirms one's agency as a part of the natural history of human culture (a clear indicator of this rejection is the Christian attitude toward the bodily and, thereby, to humans as embodied). As Katsafanas notes, Christianity expresses this denial of will to power in three main ways:

> First, the values proposed by Judeo-Christian morality celebrate weakness and condemn power. For example, "weakness is being lied into something meritorious . . . impotence which doesn't retaliate is being turned into 'goodness'; timid baseness is being turned into 'humility'; submission to people one hates is being turned into 'obedience'" (GM 1.14). Second, the Judeo-Christian ethic associates negative emotions with manifestations of power and positive emotions with manifestations of weakness: "for too long, man has viewed his natural inclinations with an 'evil eye', so that they finally come to be intertwined with the 'bad conscience' in him" (GM II.24). Third, Judeo-Christian morality employs a conception of agency that enables the weak to see their weakness as chosen, and hence as strength (GM I.13). (2018: 86)

This devaluation can be grasped in terms of the way in which the attitude cultivated by Christianity expresses a relation to the challenges faced by the Christian as transcendent ideals for whose realization his or her agency is merely a vehicle. The Christian thereby instrumentalizes his own agency and cannot coherently value the feeling of power as expressive of power, of will to power, rather he must see it as something else, for example, as a sign of God's grace.

Nietzsche's concern with ethical culture is predicated on whether an ethical culture, as the relevant unit of evaluation, can value the feeling of power that is the expression, and experience of the expression, of one's agency as a creative expression of will to power and, hence, as an affirmation of humanity as part of the natural order of the world.[2] The importance of the ethical culture of the Renaissance and the concept of *virtù* for Nietzsche is that it can be seen as a rebellion against Christianity that aims to engage in just such an affirmation of humanity.

2 Nietzsche, Machiavelli, and Renaissance *virtù*

Nietzsche had read Machiavelli's *il Principe* in Italian (and possibly also German) in 1862 as part of his extracurricular Italian class when aged seventeen or eighteen (Brobjer 2008: 44). Twenty-five years later in 1887 he may have reread it in French translation while engaging with Gebhart's *Etudes meridionales* which contained a chapter on Machiavelli—which Brobjer speculates led to Nietzsche's praise for Machiavelli in TI (Brobjer 2008: 104) and, by implication, *The Antichrist*. Between the young Nietzsche and his final texts lies also his engagement in Basel with the historian Jacob Burckhardt, whose *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* was the first serious cultural history of the Renaissance as a distinct period and whose account of political agency in artistic terms is significantly drawn from Machiavelli. It is worth noting further that Nietzsche's own background in philology and his teaching at Basel meant he was also in a position to read Machiavelli's *il Principe* with a keen appreciation of its complex rhetorical composition and the way in which that text engages Greek and Roman history and thinkers such as Cicero and Seneca. Before we turn to focus on Machiavelli, however, some more general features of the Renaissance and the reasons for its significance for Nietzsche need to be brought into view.

In the penultimate section of *The Antichrist*, having charged Christianity with denying the fruits of both the classical world (A s.59) and of Islam represented in Moorish culture of Spain (A s.60) to Europe, Nietzsche remarks:

> Here it is necessary to touch on a memory a hundred times more painful for Germans. The Germans have robbed Europe of the last great cultural harvest Europe had to bring home—of the harvest of the *Renaissance*. Is it at last understood, is there a *desire* to understand, *what* the Renaissance was? The *revaluation of Christian values*, the attempt, undertaken with every expedient, with every instinct, with genius of every kind, to bring about the victory of the opposing values, the *noble* values. . . . Up till now *this* has been the only great war, there has been no more decisive interrogation than that conducted by the Renaissance—the question it asks is the question I ask—neither has there been a form of *attack* more fundamental, more direct, and more strenuously delivered on the entire front and at the enemy's centre! (A s.61)

This memory should be painful to Germans because Nietzsche regards Luther's establishment of the Reformation as Christianity's overcoming of the Renaissance as countermovement. But in an important and revealing remark in

this section, Nietzsche identifies his own stance with a possibility that was, by misfortune, lost:

> To attack at the decisive point, in the very seat of Christianity, to set the *noble* values on the throne, which is to say to set them *into* the instincts, the deepest needs and desires of him who sits thereon. . . . I see in my mind's eye a *possibility* of a quite unearthly fascination and splendor. . . . I behold a spectacle at once so meaningful and so strangely paradoxical it would have given all the gods of Olympus an opportunity for an immortal roar of laughter—*Cesare Borgia as Pope*. . . . Am I understood? . . . Very well, *that* would have been a victory of the only sort I desire today—Christianity would have thereby been *abolished*! (A s.61)

Instead, Luther went to Rome:

> What Luther saw was the *corruption* of the Papacy, while precisely the opposite was palpably obvious: the old corruption, the *peccatum originale*, Christianity *no* longer sat on the Papal throne! Life sat there instead! the triumph of life! the great Yes to all lofty, beautiful, daring things! . . . And Luther *restored the Church*: he attacked it. . . . The Renaissance—an event without meaning, a great *in vain*! (A s.61)

Nietzsche compresses a great deal into these remarks and to unpack them I will start with his thought-experiment of Cesare Borgia as Pope, before turning to his comments on the Renaissance and noble values, and finally to Machiavelli.

The counterfactual that Cesare Borgia as Pope would have had serious consequences for Christianity is a thought that Nietzsche may have drawn from Burckhardt, albeit with a different valuation. In his classic study of Renaissance Italy, Burckhardt comments on this possibility noting that there is good reason to think that Cesare Borgia aimed to succeed his father as Pope and further commenting:

> In fact, there can be no doubt whatever that Cesare, whether chosen pope or not after Alexander, meant to keep possession of the pontifical state at any cost, and that this, after all the enormities he had committed, he could not as pope have succeeded in doing permanently. He, if anybody, could have secularized the States of the Church, and he would have been forced to do so to keep them. Unless we are much deceived this is the real reason of the secret sympathy with which Machiavelli treats the great criminal: from Cesare, or from nobody, could it be hoped that he "would draw the steel from the wound," in other words, annihilate the papacy—the source of all foreign interests and of all the divisions of Italy. (1990: 88)

While Burckhardt is skeptical about Cesare's abilities to achieve these goals even if he had not died, he acknowledges that it is unclear "how far scandal and indignation of Christendom might have gone" if Borgia had continued his activities under his father's papacy and comments:

> And what might not Cesare have achieved if, at the moment when his father died, he had not himself been laid upon a sickbed! What a conclave would that have been, in which armed with all his weapons, he had extorted his election from a college whose numbers he had judiciously reduced by poison—and this at a time when there was no French army at hand! In pursuing such a hypothesis the imagination loses itself in an abyss. (1990: 90)

Nietzsche, by contrast to Burckhardt, is a thinker willing to risk staring into abysses.

However, let us step back from the counterfactual of Cesare Borgia as Pope and pose the more general question of Nietzsche's identification of the Renaissance with the valuation of noble values. The central ethical innovation of the Renaissance was undertaken by the humanist thinkers who sought to rehabilitate *love of worldly glory* as a worthy human end in the context of its attempts at reconciling classical ethics and Christianity. It is worth noting that this stance of the humanists contrasted with the view taken by the scholastic philosophers of this period such as Giles of Rome and St. Thomas Aquinas who insisted on the inappropriateness of love of glory on the grounds that the good man should exhibit contempt for worldly glory (Skinner 2002: 122). As Skinner remarks,

> Among the many contrasts between the schoolmen and the humanists, one of the most revealing is that the latter never exhibit any such guilt or anxiety about world glory or its pursuit. On the contrary, we find Petrarch declaring that his whole purpose in offering advice to Francesco da Carrara is "to lead you to immediate fame and future glory in the best possible way." Petrarch accepts that rulers ought to cultivate those qualities "which serve not merely as means to glory but also as steps to heaven at the same time." But this concession represents his whole acknowledgment of the deeply rooted Christian suspicion of *gloria mundi* and those who aspire to it. (2002: 122)

The valuing of worldly glory as one of the highest values so manifest in the Greek and Roman texts that animate the Renaissance—and so critical to both Burkhardt's and Nietzsche's own understandings of the *agonic* character of ancient ethical culture as key to production of genius—is central to the culture of *individuality* that finds expression in the Renaissance and its valuing of the

creative talent—across the domains of art, science, economics, and politics—of individuals with little regard to circumstances of birth or social position. It is this valuing of worldly glory that finds expression in the Renaissance concept of *virtù* to which Nietzsche appeals, where *virtù* refers to those capabilities required for, and manifest in, virtuosi performance in a domain of human conduct constitutively exposed to chance and necessity—and it is Machiavelli who is the most penetrating theorist of *virtù*, not least because Machiavelli both recognizes and mobilizes love of worldly glory against Christianity, that is, not merely against the papacy as a major source of the political ills of Italy but also against Christianity as an ethical orientation. Thus, in his *Discourses*, Machiavelli constructs a sharp contrast between the outlook of Christianity and that of the civic religion of the ancient world:

> The old religion did not beatify men unless they were replete with worldly glory (*mondana gloria*): army commanders, for instance, and rulers of republics. Our religion has glorified humble and contemplative men, rather than men of action. It has assigned as man's highest good humility, abnegation, and contempt of the world (*dispregio delle cose umane*), whereas the other identified it with greatness of spirit, bodily strength, and everything else that conduces to make men very bold. And if our religion demands that in you there be strength, what it asks for is strength to suffer rather than strength to do bold things. (1996: 278, translation adjusted)

In contrast to humanist authors who sought to reconcile Classical and Christian outlooks, Machiavelli takes direct aim at Christianity as a way of life that unfits one for politics in respect of the disposition and capacities that it cultivates, and does so because, as an outlook, it glorifies spiritual grace rather than worldly endeavors and achievements. Notice the asymmetry here in the context of Nietzsche's point concerning ethical culture and the valuing of will to power: although Christianity glorifies those who are judged to have achieved a state of spiritual grace through institutions such as sainthood, being thus glorified cannot be a coherent motivation for anyone whose achievements would legitimately qualify them for such glorification since such a motivation would entail failing to exhibit the disposition (humility, abnegation, contempt for world things) required for a state of spiritual grace; by contrast, those who are glorified by civic religion can coherently be motivated by the love of glory. Christianity is a problem for political culture because it devalues worldly glory, subordinating it to spiritual grace—an act of subordination that is given material and symbolic expression through the artistic and institutional glorification of saints. The

political effect of the ideological hegemony of Christianity is, Machiavelli charges, "to have made the world weak, and to have handed it over as prey to the wicked" (1996: 278).

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli adopts the authorial persona of adviser to *il principe nuovo* rather than counselor to an established ruler (as was more typical of the humanist *speculum principis* genre) and develops an account of princely *virtù* in terms of the qualities that *il principe nuovo* requires if he is to meet the challenges of maintaining his rule and establishing a stable structure of rule that will survive beyond him, this being the basic criterion of achieving glory in the political domain.[3] For my current purposes, I want to highlight only three features of Machiavelli's text that would have been immediately apparent to Nietzsche and that compose the point to which Nietzsche refers in TI, namely, Machiavelli's realism.

The first is that *The Prince* is grounded in a coolly analytical exploration of a range of political scenarios that *il principe nuovo* may confront depending on how he came to acquire his state and the internal conditions and external circumstances in which it is situated that embeds the reader within the task of thinking through political action under these conditions through consideration of a range of exemplars of success and failure drawn from classical history and contemporary events, both of which make them vivid to his humanist audience. We may think of the text as "a politics simulator" by analogy with the flight simulators on which pilots are trained; one is through which Machiavelli attempts to cultivate the art of political judgment that attends to the human, all too human motivations of political actors.

The second is that Machiavelli's analysis is an exemplar of tragic vision in that he acknowledges—as a central part of his account—that the world in which we act is only ever partly intelligible to us and not necessarily receptive to our purposes. This is most clearly drawn out in Machiavelli's treatment of the figure of *fortuna* and his acknowledgment that while political virtuosity can reduce one's dependence on luck, it cannot fully eliminate it. Human beings are constitutively exposed to chance and necessity, and actors in the political domain are perhaps exceptionally vulnerable in this respect, hence any ethics—and any political ethics—must begin with the acknowledgment of the circumstances of human agency.

The third is that Machiavelli's development of his account of princely *virtù* involves intense engagement with the Roman moralists—primarily Cicero and Seneca—in terms of both their accounts of the general virtues (prudence,

justice, courage, temperance) and the specific virtues that human authors termed "princely virtues" (liberality, clemency, and fidelity). With respect to the former, Machiavelli is clear that a prince should act virtuously when possible but insists that he must be prepared to act otherwise and acquire the skill of judging when it is prudent to do so. Here Machiavelli sets himself against the Roman moralists and roots himself in the tradition of Thucydides and Roman historians such as Livy, Sallust, and Tacitus. Machiavelli can be taken to be redefining *virtù* such that prudence now encompasses judging when departures from the "moral virtues" of justice, courage, and temperance in their classic Ciceronian exposition are appropriate to the purpose of sustaining the state. However, as Skinner (2017) has recently argued, Machiavelli largely (if not fully consistently) adopts a different tack when addressing the "princely virtues" in which he charges that what in our corrupt world, we take to be liberality, clemency, and fidelity are not the princely virtues as they should be understood but rather as they have been redescribed through the use of the rhetorical device of *paradiastole* by which a vice is made to appear as a virtue. We may note, as Skinner does not, that in each case the redescription is one that serves to align the name of the classical virtue more closely to the substance of Christian ethics; thus, liberality is construed in terms that align it with the Christian duty of beneficence to the poor and needy (where doing so will require increasing taxes and hence the risk of hatred by the citizenry), clemency in terms that align it with the Christian duty to forgive one's enemies (where doing so increases threats to the state), and fidelity in terms that align it with the Christian duty of keeping one's promises (even where others do not and this exposes the state to danger). In relation to these princely virtues, then, Machiavelli's analysis is directed to exposing the way in which the humanist attempts to reconcile the ethical outlook of Christianity with classical virtue serve only to provide redescriptions of the latter in which what are more rightly taken to be princely vices that undermine the political agent's ability to meet the challenges that they confront are now presented under the name of these virtues. It is notable in this context that a key part of Nietzsche's charge against the priests in the first essay of GM is precisely that they deploy this technique of *paradiastole* in redescribing the noble virtues as vices—this is what the dialogue of Mr. Rash and Mr. Curious (GM I s.14) discloses.

How, though, does this focus on Machiavelli and *virtù* deepen our understanding of Nietzsche?

3 Nietzsche's ethics of *virtù*

The first point that I want to draw out of this discussion of Machiavelli and the Renaissance for Nietzsche is that the realism that Nietzsche identifies himself as inheriting from Thucydides and Machiavelli and construes as "their absolute will not to fool themselves and to see reason in *reality—not* in 'reason,' still less in 'morality'" (TI "What I owe to the ancients" s.2) is to be opposed to the "mendacity" and "falsification" that Nietzsche identifies with the Jewish priests and with Pauline Christianity. This psychological realism is, for Nietzsche, a principle of intellectual conscience, a methodological requirement for any ethical investigation of the natural history of humanity—and its presence or absence in any ethical culture that he investigates is symptomatic of the psychic health of that ethical culture.

Where Nietzsche takes himself to build on his predecessors is in his development of an analysis of human psychology that combines an account of human drives and of ethical culture that can, through the doctrine of will to power, both explain how ethical cultures emerge in which will to power takes pathological forms (i.e., in which it is manifested in ways that devalue itself) and provide an account of human flourishing not in terms of an ethical telos, an substantive ideal of perfection to be realized, but in terms of the conditions of an ethical culture in which human beings stand in appropriate practical relations to their ideals as challenges, in which they exhibit the relevant attitude toward their agency, one that he identifies with "freedom"—and recall that, for Nietzsche, will to power can be glossed as "the instinct for freedom" (GM II s.17)—conceived as "the will to self-responsibility" (TI *Expeditions* s.38). The ethical culture of the Renaissance to the extent that it is structured in terms of *love of worldly glory* is exemplary of one way in which this attitude can be expressed and it is so because it situates the individual with an *agonal* culture. *Gloria mundi* has three salient aspects for Nietzsche's concerns. First, its achievement requires the exhibition of virtuosity in the relevant field. Second, it situates the actor within an agon, that is, in competitive relations with both contemporaries and past practitioners. Third, it affirms the value of this world. All three of these are needed on Nietzsche's account for an ethical culture of human flourishing.

The salience of the institution of the agon and of agonal culture in this context is that it cultivates the disposition to challenge oneself through a mode of evaluation that privileges the achievement of virtuosity (more precisely,

*virt*ù in Machiavelli's sense) in both specific practices such as politics, dramatic composition, sport, and the general practice of living a life. The institution of the agon and agonal culture more generally situates participants precisely in this stance of relating to one's engagement in a practice as taking up the challenges that mastery of the practice requires, where such mastery is manifest in one's ability to develop or alter what can count as an exemplary performance of the practice.[4] (Thus, for example, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides may each be seen as altering our understanding of what can count as an exemplar of tragic drama.) It is important to note though that this agonic stance cannot be adopted at will, rather it is only through the *praxis* of agonic practice (in the dual sense of participation in an agonic practice and the practicing of this agonic relation to self) that agents become agents with the capacity and disposition to stand in this relation to themselves.

We can draw out the link to Nietzsche's conception of freedom by considering the difference that is introduced in relating to the practicing of one's practices as the praxis of agonic practice. The praxis of practice forms the agent through the development of their powers to engage in, and realize the goods of, the practice in question (to be able to overcome obstacles and resistances to mastery of the practice that are internal to participation in the practice, for example, the cultivation of the skills required) and, at the same time, the development of their power to engage in the *self-directed* exercise of one's powers (i.e., to be able to overcome obstacles and resistances to mastery of the practice that are internal to one's own current constitution as an agent). The praxis of *agonic* practice cultivates also the *disposition* to develop one's powers to overcome the challenges posed by mastering the practice, including those challenges to achieving this mastery that are internal to one's current constitution as an agent. Thus, the praxis of agonic practice cultivates an agonic relationship to oneself, a practical relationship to oneself characterized by a disposition to self-overcoming understood as the disposition to increase one's powers to act and especially one's ability to *self-direct* the exercise of one's agency.

This power of *self-direction* refers to one's ability to set and bind the exercise of one's powers to one's own ends and hence to take responsibility for oneself, for who one is, for what one's projects are, for how one acts. To stand in this practical relationship to self is, on Nietzsche's account, to exhibit "the will to self-responsibility" that distinguishes the autonomous agent (TI *Expeditions* s.38) and he gives expression to this understanding of freedom through the exemplary figure of the *sovereign individual*: "The human being with his own independent

long will, the human being who is *permitted to promise* [*der versprechen darf*]" (GM II s.2). The sovereign individual is autonomous precisely because he is able and disposed to set his own ends as challenges to overcome and to bind his will to the task of realizing these ends as meeting these challenges.

To see the relationship of this view to the formal view of human flourishing that Nietzsche advances, we need only notice that as one's powers (including one's power to engage in the self-directed exercise of one's powers) develop, so too do the demands of what can count as a challenge—and hence this activity of self-overcoming has no final telos (if the challenge can be overcome, it is not a *final* telos; if it cannot be overcome, it is not a challenge), rather it denotes a continuing process of self-overcoming. This conception of freedom thus discloses Nietzsche's commitment to a view of human flourishing that is not pictured as directed at a final telos, but rather as a process of moving from, in Emerson's terms, "the attained self" (one's current constitution as an agent) to "the attainable self" (the constitution of one's agency that one can achieve through taking up challenges, that is, pursuing valuable ends that one is or becomes capable of realizing).

If cogent, this argument shows how Nietzsche's relation to Machiavelli provides him with an exemplar of a mode of theorizing that is engaged in a project of reevaluation and of an ethical culture—the Renaissance—that is practically engaged in the project of revaluing Christian values and of embracing a noble mode of valuation. But can reflection on Machiavelli provide any further insight into Nietzsche's work? I think so.

One important insight that emerges from engagement with Machiavelli is particularly pertinent in relation to the figure of the sovereign individual as an exemplar of freedom through which Nietzsche draws a contrast between those who can credibly promise and those who cannot (GM II s.2). Although there is considerable debate about whether or not the sovereign individual represents some kind of ethical ideal for Nietzsche, I do not want here to focus on that debate beyond noting that being able to make credible commitments is a condition of possibility of ethical integrity. Rather I want to draw attention to a point that has received less attention, namely, Nietzsche's characterization of the sovereign individual in the following passage:

> The "free" man, the possessor of an enduring, unbreakable will, thus has his own *standard of value*: in the possession of such a will: viewing others from his own standpoint, he respects or despises; and just as he will necessarily respect his peers, the strong and the reliable (those with the prerogative to promise)—

> that is everyone who promises like a sovereign, ponderously, seldom, slowly, and is sparing with his trust, who *confers an honour* when he places his trust, who gives his word as something that can be relied on, because he is strong enough to remain upright in the face of mishap or even "in the face of fate": so he will necessarily be ready to kick the febrile whippets who promise without that prerogative, and will save the rod for the liar who breaks his word in the very moment it passes his lips. (GM II s.2)

Here Nietzsche aligns the sovereign individual's promising with the classical virtue of prudence that Machiavelli, like Thucydides and the Roman historians (Livy, Tacitus, et al.), endorses. Two points are particularly notable for our purposes. The first concerns why the sovereign individual "promises like a sovereign, ponderously, seldom, slowly, and is sparing with his trust" and why he "*confers an honour* when he places his trust." The second concerns the relationship of this virtue to Christian morality.

With respect to the first point, we can note that prudence, for realists such as Thucydides and Machiavelli, entailed close attention not to what others say but what they do. To engage in promise-making with another, mutually binding yourself to one another (for example, through a treaty between states), is to make yourself dependent on the fate of another, *to expose yourself to their exposure to chance and necessity*. When Nietzsche writes that the sovereign individual is one "who gives his word as something that can be relied on, because he is strong enough to remain upright in the face of mishap or even 'in the face of fate,'" he is drawing attention to this point (consider, for example, the United Kingdom's Treaty with Poland which required the United Kingdom to come to its defense if subject to invasion by another state as occurred when Poland was invaded by Germany in 1939). Given that such promise-making exposes the individual to the fate of another, there are good reasons to consider the character of the actor to whom one is binding oneself. Are they trustworthy? This encompasses not only whether they are honest in their dealings, but also whether they are prudent in judgment and in action, that is, whether their conduct is liable through, for example, recklessness, cowardice, or hubris to expose you unnecessarily to *fortuna*. It is for just this reason that the sovereign individual, in engaging in promise-making with another, is conferring distinction because he or she is acknowledging the other as one who can be trusted and can be relied on to act prudently.

With respect to the second point, let us recall Machiavelli's reevaluation of the princely virtue of fidelity in *The Prince*. Here, as Skinner (2017) argues,

Machiavelli is not primarily making the point that the prince may need to do what is seen as evil for good reasons (a point that Machiavelli does make more generally), rather in chapter 18 of *The Prince* Machiavelli is charging that the classical virtue of fidelity, of keeping faith, has been redescribed through Christian morality as an unconditional duty, a categorical imperative. However, in a world in which many others cannot be relied onto keep faith, Machiavelli notes this amounts to redescribing and condemning—that is, reevaluating—prudential calculations about who to trust about what and to what extent as "cowardice or deceitfulness" (Skinner 2017: 151). Machiavelli is, thus, engaged in the project of reevaluating fidelity, of showing that the idea that you should maintain faith with anyone and everyone no matter what embodies "a dangerous misunderstanding of *fides* and its requirements" (Skinner 2017: 151). In this context, Nietzsche's account of the sovereign individual should not be seen simply as the expression of a view on autonomy, on binding oneself to one's own laws, but rather as the reclaiming, following Thucydides and Machiavelli, of the noble virtue of fidelity from Christian morality. The sovereign individual is characterized by mastery over the practice of promising which means knowing when to promise and when not to promise, but also when to keep, and when it is justifiable to break, one's word.

4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have focused on one specific feature of Nietzsche's argument in *The Antichrist*, namely, his appeal to the Renaissance concept of *virtù*. In doing so, I have tried to show that attending to what Nietzsche says about the Renaissance in this text and working through the concept of *virtù* in the hands of Machiavelli, the Renaissance thinker with whom Nietzsche most closely identifies, helps to clarify the nature of the problem that Nietzsche takes himself to be addressing and the project in which he is engaged. More specifically, we may note that Nietzsche finds in Machiavelli an attitude toward realism in ethical inquiry and agonism as a cultural ethos that he identifies with ethical cultures that support human flourishing. At the same time, I have sought to show that attending to Machiavelli helps to draw out features of Nietzsche's understanding of the problem of Christianity and his reflections on the sovereign individual that have tended to be overlooked in contemporary Nietzsche scholarship. There is much more than could be said here concerning

Machiavelli's and Nietzsche's uses of history, the rhetorical composition of their works, their common recourse of exemplars, and their shared endorsement of republican political institutions. These topics must, alas, await another occasion.

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Notes

1 I take this point to be continuous with the focus on what ethical outlooks express that Huddleston (2015) identifies as central to Nietzsche's critique of morality.
2 See Katsafanas 2018 for a fuller analysis of this point.
3 Debates concerning how to understand what Machiavelli is doing in the text-act that is *The Prince* are as legion as those concerning, for example, what Nietzsche is doing in the text-act that is GM. A particular point of contention is how this work relates to Machiavelli's own republicanism—for my own view, see Owen (2016).
4 The phrase "develop or alter" is meant here to register the point that mastery can be exhibited both by taking an established way of performing the practice to new heights (for example, Mozart) or in transforming the way of performing the practice (for example, Beethoven).

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5

Nietzsche's Critique of Kant's Priestly Philosophy

Paul S. Loeb

At the start of *The Antichrist*, Friedrich Nietzsche offers his final assessment of Immanuel Kant's philosophical achievement: "The Protestant minister is the grandfather of German philosophy. [. . .] Kant's success is just a theologian's success" (A 10). Although there has been a lot of discussion recently about the influence of Kant's critical philosophy on Nietzsche's evolving thought, very little attention has been paid to this provocative statement. Most historians of philosophy would probably dismiss it as typically hyperbolic and leave it at that. But in this chapter I want to take this statement seriously, and I want to ask to what extent it helps us gain a deeper understanding of Kant's first Critique and of Nietzsche's view of the relation between philosophy and religion.

My argument in this chapter is organized as follows. First, I summarize Nietzsche's genealogy of the Protestant roots of Kant's idea of a critique of pure reason. Next, I explore Nietzsche's general account of the priestly type, with a special focus on his claim that this type needs to exert its will to power through lies and deception. After that, I turn to Nietzsche's earlier text, GM, so as to examine his account there of the historical emergence of philosophers who had to camouflage themselves as priests to avoid being persecuted by the established society. I then return to *The Antichrist* so as to consider Nietzsche's view that these philosophers used their natural drives and virtues to defend the priestly lies that they internalized while disguised as priests. Next, I explain why Nietzsche offers Kant as an example of this kind of priestly philosopher. His implied contrast is himself, and other philosophers like himself, whose strength, he says, allowed them to turn their skeptical talents against their internalized priestly lies. I then look to Kant's debate with

Hume in the first Critique as an illustration of Nietzsche's idea that there must be a confrontation between those weak-willed philosophers whose reason remains corrupted by priestly deception and those strong-minded philosophers who are able to emancipate themselves from priestly manipulation. Finally, I consider how Nietzsche might have criticized Kant's decision to conclude his first Critique with a moral theology.

1 Kant's idea of a critique of pure reason

In a strange twist to the conclusion of the Age of Enlightenment, Kant famously declares in his *Critique of Pure Reason* that he has found it necessary to deny knowledge so as to make room for faith (Bxxx, A745/B773, Kant (1929)).[1] What he means by this is that he has devised a new "critical" employment for the human intellect that allows him to demonstrate that this same intellect can never know anything about the world as it really is. Geometers and mathematicians (such as Thales, Euclid, and Descartes) and natural scientists (such as Ptolemy, Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton) had all simply assumed that their theories concerned the world as it really is. But Kant argued that these theories actually concerned only the world as it is constructed by the human mind on the basis of some kind of sensory input. For example, Newton believed that he had discovered a law of gravitation that explained and predicted the movements of diverse parts of the mind-independent structure of the universe—the falling apple, the swelling ocean tides, and the orbiting moon. According to Kant, however, what Newton had actually discovered was merely a new law of the human mind that allows us to organize and synthesize diverse sensory inputs into an experiential whole (A256-8/B312-4). Ironically, then, Kant's "Copernican" revolution in philosophy demoted the Copernican revolution in astronomy from a claim about the spectator-dependent movements of mind-independent celestial bodies to a claim about the human mind's arrangement of its own representations (Bxvi-xvii, Bxxii n.).[2]

According to Kant, this "critical" idealism allowed him to make room for faith because no one would now be able to use these mathematically informed scientific theories to challenge faith-based religious and moral claims about the world as it really is—that is, claims about God, freedom, and immortality. He imagines being asked what kind of treasure he has left to posterity with

this new invention of a "critical" use of the intellect. How has he benefited humankind by showing that it cannot discover any knowledge about the real world? How has the human intellect profited by demonstrating its own impotence? In reply, Kant cites the influence of Socrates's elenctic method: "[T]he inestimable benefit, that all objections to morality and religion will be forever silenced in Socratic fashion, namely, by the clearest proof of the ignorance of the opponents" (Bxxxi). This is a benefit to humankind, he argues, because it keeps the schools of philosophy from thinking that they have some special insight into matters of universal human concern—matters that "are equally within the reach of the great multitude (ever to be held by us in the highest esteem)" (Bxxx). When these schools of philosophy therefore limit themselves to studying grounds of proof that are universally comprehensible and sufficient for moral purposes, "then not only do these latter possessions remain undisturbed, but through this very fact they acquire yet greater authority" (Bxxx). From this it follows that the true job of philosophers is to protect the masses, the public, and even the clergy from their own potentially corrupting influence. They must keep themselves under close surveillance to ensure that they do not trespass the rights of speculative reason and start philosophizing about the world as it really is. For this is what leads them to pervert their teachings into universally injurious doctrines like atheism and freethinking (Bxxxiii-xxxv). In perhaps the most startling passage from his new Preface to the first Critique, Kant even suggests that his philosophy should be regarded as a kind of police that will guard against trespassing philosophers who might threaten to destroy the moral employment of pure reason (Bxxv).

2 The Protestant roots of Kant's idea

Throughout his publishing career, Nietzsche spent more time thinking about Kant than about any other figure in the history of philosophy except Plato and Schopenhauer. But his most intense, sustained, and definitive confrontation with Kant appears in one of the last works he prepared for publication, *The Antichrist*. Here Nietzsche locates "Kant and so-called German philosophy" in the context of Luther's Reformation and of "the most unclean kind of Christianity there is, the most incurable, the most irrefutable: Protestantism" (A 61).[3] Indeed, Nietzsche writes, it was precisely this Protestant obsession with

irrefutability that led German scholars—of whom three-fourths were the sons of Protestant ministers and teachers—to greet Kant's first Critique with jubilation:

> The theologian's instinct in the German scholar guessed just *what* was possible once again . . . . A secret path to the old ideal lay open, the concept "*true* world," the concept of morality as *essence* of the world (—these two most malignant errors!) were now once again, thanks to a wily and shrewd skepticism, if not provable, then at least no longer *refutable*. . . . Reason, the *right* of reason, does not extend that far. . . . Reality had been made into an "appearance"; a completely *mendaciously-fabricated* world, that of being, was made into reality. . . . Kant's success is just a theologian's success: like Luther, like Leibniz, Kant was one more impediment to an already unsteady German integrity– – (A 10)

According to Nietzsche, that is, Kant's "critical" idealism was simply a theologically inspired lie. His distinction between the world of things in themselves (the world of morality, God, freedom, and the soul's immortality) and the world of appearances (the world described by Copernicus and Newton) was merely a means of reinstalling the old theological dichotomy (A 17).[4] As with past theologians, the former world is a mendacious fabrication and the latter world is actually the only reality there is. But instead of following past theologians in their futile attempt to prove the existence of this fictitious supernatural world of morality and religion, Kant hit upon the idea of turning the human intellect against itself to prevent it from even wanting to doubt this fictitious world. The key to making this happen was to have reason itself discover that this fictitious world could never be known by reason:

> Even Kant, with his categorical imperative, was on the same path: his reason became *practical* in this matter.—There are questions in which human beings are *not* entitled to a decision about truth and untruth; all the supreme questions, all the supreme value problems, are beyond human reason. . . . To comprehend the limits of reason—only *this* is truly philosophy. (A 55)

Or, as Nietzsche puts it in the 1886 Preface to his earlier work *Dawn*, Kant was so worried about reason's power to expose the theological fabrication that he directed reason to establish the limits of its own power. Not coincidentally, these were limits that declared precisely this fabrication out of bounds by showing it to be indemonstrable, irrefutable, and incomprehensible:

> [I]n order to make room for *his* "moral realm," [Kant] found himself obliged to posit an indemonstrable world, a logical "beyond"—it was precisely for this

> reason that he needed his critique of pure reason! In other words: *he wouldn't have needed it* if one thing hadn't been more important to him than anything else: to render the "moral realm" invulnerable, better yet, incomprehensible to reason—he felt too powerfully just this vulnerability of a moral order of things to an assault by reason! (D P: 3)[5]

In Nietzsche's view, then, Kant's new idea of a critique of pure reason was a kind of intellectual defense system designed to keep logicians, mathematicians, scientists, and especially the schools of philosophy from discovering, exposing, and debunking the lies of his Protestant faith. When Kant said that he was denying knowledge to make room for this faith, what he really meant is that he was prohibiting knowledge to protect these lies. And when he said that his first Critique would serve as a kind of police to keep citizens from doing mutual harm to each other, what he really meant is that it would police the intellectuals in the community, especially the philosophers, so as to keep them from doing harm to the ruling interests of its religious and moral leaders—the priests.

3 Priestly power and priestly lies

In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche identifies the priests, the theologians, the priestly type, the priestly peoples, the priestly races, and the priestly organizations, as the source of all the biggest lies and falsehoods in human history. This includes priests in the Eastern traditions as well as in the Western traditions (A 20–23, 55), in ancient times as well as in modern times (A 57–61), and pagan priests as well as Christian priests (A 55–57). According to Nietzsche, the whole key to understanding priests and founders of religions is to recognize that they are "gruesome hybrids of sickness and will to power" (EH P: 4). They are filled with an overwhelming lust to rule (A 26, 42) at the same time as their distressed physiological health robs them of the strength needed to simply command and compel obedience. As Nietzsche explains in GM this psychological dilemma of being impotent while desperately craving power makes priests evil enemies and great haters:

> From the start there has been something *unhealthy* in such priestly aristocracies and in the habits prevailing there, that shy away from action and are partly brooding, partly emotionally explosive, and whose consequence seems to be an intestinal disease and neurasthenia that has almost invariably afflicted priests

> throughout the ages. [. . .] As is well known, priests are the *most evil enemies*—but why is this so? Because they are the most impotent. From their impotence their hatred grows to monstrous and uncanny proportions, to the most spiritual and poisonous kind of hatred. The truly great haters in world history have always been priests, also the most ingenious haters—compared with the spirit of priestly revenge all other spirit barely merits consideration. (GM I: 6–7)

The priests' solution to this dilemma can be found in the fact that their will to power prevents them from admitting to themselves that they are unhealthy and impotent. According to Nietzsche, lying is "wanting *not* to see what you see, wanting not to see it the *way* you see it," and "the most common lie is the one you tell yourself" (A 55). So priests lie to themselves about their illness and "instinctively deny that sickness is sickness" (A 51):

> "Faith" means not *wanting* to know what is true. The pietist, the priest of both sexes, is false *because* he is sick: his instinct *demands* that truth not be conceded at any point. (A 52)

More extravagantly, priests are driven by their lust for power into deceiving themselves that the entire despised world in which they are sick and impotent does not really exist and that the "true" world, a preferable world they mendaciously fabricate, is a world in which they are not sick or impotent at all:

> This purely *fictitious world* distinguishes itself from the world of dreams, very much to its disadvantage, by the fact that the latter *mirrors* reality, whereas *the former* falsifies, devalues, and negates reality. . . . this whole fictitious world is rooted in a *hatred* of the natural (of reality!), it is the expression of a profound dissatisfaction with reality. . . . *But this explains everything.* Who are the only people with a motive to *lie their way* out of reality? Those who *suffer* from it. But to suffer from reality means to be a piece of reality that is a *casualty* . . . (A15)

However, once priests have come to believe the lies they have told themselves, they discover that they can tell these same lies to others with perfect innocence and honesty (A 55; GM III: 19). And they discover as well that when they do this they are able to gain the kind of power over others that they have always so desperately craved. In particular, as Nietzsche explains at more length in his GM, they are able to gain power over other sick people who need to hear just these same kind of lies. Because priests are hybrids of sickness and great will to power, they are instinctively drawn into the role of shepherds who form, organize, guide, and tyrannize herds of people who are sick like themselves but who have very little will to power:

> [A]nd now we have and hold in both hands the meaning of ascetic priests. We have to regard ascetic priests as the predestined saviors, shepherds, and advocates of the sick herds: only then do we understand their monstrous historical mission. *Dominion over the suffering* is their kingdom, that is where their instinct directs them, in this they possess their most distinctive art, their mastery, their kind of happiness. They must be sick themselves, they must be fundamentally related to the sick and the misfits in order to understand them; but they must also be strong, master of themselves even more than of others, that is, unscathed especially in their will to power, so as to be trusted and feared by the sick, so that they can be their support, resistance, prop, compulsion, taskmaster, tyrant, and god. (GM III: 15; cf. also GM III: 13, 18 and A 42)

According to Nietzsche, the vast majority of human beings are sick, so priests are able to gain immense power over most of the human population (A 17, 51). To their lies about the "true" world in which they and their followers are not sick at all, they now add a new lie about supremely powerful inhabitants of this world who speak directly to the priests and who command total submission and obedience to the priests. Since priests do not have the strength to command this on their own, they aim to convince others that they are in direct touch with supernatural rulers who do have this strength. One of their most effective means of doing this is to pretend that they have found a "holy" book, which they themselves have secretly written, in which these "divine" commandments are "revealed."

In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche offers "the Jewish priesthood" as an outstanding illustration of all these general points:

> [A] parasitical type of person, thriving only at the expense of all healthy forms of life, the *priest*, uses the name of God in vain: he calls a state of affairs in which the priest determines the value of things "the kingdom of God"; he calls the means by which such a state is attained or maintained "the will of God"; with cold-blooded cynicism he measures peoples, ages, individuals, according to whether they profited or resisted the overlordship of the priests. [. . .] One step further: the "will of God," that is, the conditions for the preservation of priestly power, must be *known*—to this end a "revelation" is required. In plain language: a great literary forgery becomes necessary, a "holy scripture" is discovered. [. . .] Disobedience of God, that is, of the priest, of "the law," is now called "sin"; the means for "reconciliation with God" are, as is fitting, means that merely guarantee a still more thorough submission to the priest: the priest alone "redeems." . . . Psychologically considered, "sins" become indispensable in any society organized by priests: they are the real levers of power, the priest

> *lives* on the sins, it is essential for him that people "sin." . . . Supreme principle: "God forgives those who repent"—in plain language: *those who submit to the priest.* (A 26)

4 Priestly anti-intellectualism

According to Nietzsche, priests also know, on an instinctive and unconscious level, that they must do all they can to prevent the detection and exposure of the lies they have told themselves and their sick flock. Such exposure would shatter their falsified self-image and ruin their dominance over the human herd. So they add the further lie that it is not possible for them to lie because they are speaking about matters that are beyond human comprehension:

> Moral: priests do *not* lie—the question "true" or "untrue" in the matters that priests speak about does not permit any lying at all. For in order to lie one would have to be able to decide *what* is true here. But this is just what human beings *cannot* do; so the priest is only God's mouthpiece.—Such a priestly syllogism is by no means only Jewish and Christian; the right to lie and the *shrewdness* of "revelation" belong to the priestly type, to the priests of *décadence* as much as to the priests of paganism. (A 55)

Of course, it is not true that the subject matters of priestly lies are beyond human comprehension. So the priests must lie again, claiming that the supernatural rulers forbid the priests' followers from questioning anything they say: "But when *faith* is needed above all else, then reason, knowledge, and inquiry must be discredited: the path to truth becomes the *forbidden* path" (A 23). In an extended set of passages toward the end of *The Antichrist* (A 47–49), Nietzsche outlines the priests' mortal hostility against "the wisdom of this world," which means natural science. The priests are especially opposed to philology and medicine because both can lead to emancipation from the priestly rule. The former can expose all the swindles in the priests' "revealed" texts, while the latter can detect the priests' incurable physiological sickness. As an illustration, Nietzsche offers his interpretation of the Hebrew Genesis story that begins what he calls "the priestly book par excellence":

> [I]t is all over with priests and gods if humans become scientific!—*Moral*: science is the forbidden in itself—it alone is forbidden. Science is the *first* sin, the germ of all sins, the *original* sin. *This alone is morality.*—"Thou shalt *not*

> know"—the rest follows. [. . .] all thoughts are bad thoughts . . . . Human beings *shall* not think. (A 48)

Finally, Nietzsche explains how it is that priests get people to stop thinking.[6] Their strategy, he argues, is to teach their followers the new lie that their reason, their thinking skills, and their intellectual values are all something sinful. Priests are especially focused on teaching this lie to those of their followers who have the strongest and healthiest intellects and who are therefore best positioned to see through their lies. Although the priests cannot intellectually overpower these followers, they can use their priestly lies to manipulate them into cursing their own intellects.[7] Here are a couple of passages from *The Antichrist* in which Nietzsche cites especially the Christian theological teachings that inform Kant's philosophy:

> [Christianity] has corrupted the reason of even the intellectually strongest natures by teaching human beings to feel the supreme values of intellectuality as sinful, as misleading—as *temptations*. The most pitiful example—the corruption of Pascal, who believed his reason had been corrupted by original sin when it had been corrupted only by his Christianity!—(A 5)

> Christianity also stands opposed to all *intellectual* well-being—it is only *able* to employ sick reason as Christian reason, it sides with everything idiotic, it utters a curse against the "intellect," against the *superbia* of the healthy intellect. Because sickness belongs to the essence of Christianity, the typical Christian condition, "faith," also *has* to be a form of sickness, all straight, honest, scientific paths to knowledge *have* to be rejected by the church as *forbidden* paths. Doubt is already a sin . . . (A 52)

Before turning next to Nietzsche's concept of priestly philosophers, it is important to understand the source of his objection to priestly lies and deceptions. Obviously, we cannot interpret this as a moral objection to lying in general, since Nietzsche would then be identifying with the priestly type that he thinks is the originator of all moral thinking—including the moral prohibition against deception and self-deception (GS 344; GM III: 27). Indeed, one of Nietzsche's insights is that priests are always forced into a hypocritical violation of their own moral prohibition against lying. This is because they need to resort to the "holy" lie or *pia fraus* in order to manipulate people into behaving morally (TI "Improvers" 5; AC 55). Nor should we think that Nietzsche's objection to priestly deception derives from a commitment to the unconditional value of truth. For this would also mean identifying him with the priestly type that he

thinks is the originator and chief proponent of the ascetic ideal (GM III: 11, 24). Finally, we can rule out the idea that Nietzsche objects to priestly lies because they are the means by which priests achieve bad ends. This is because he doesn't think that all priests use their lies to accomplish objectionable goals. Nietzsche cites the pagan priests, in particular the priests who wrote the laws of Manu, as using their lies to accomplish good life-affirming ends that contrast sharply with the bad life-negating ends of the decadent Christian priests (A 55–58).

So, leaving all these plausible suggestions aside, why does Nietzsche object to priestly lies? The answer, as is usually the case with Nietzsche's criticisms in his mature philosophy, has to do with origins. In his view, priests simply don't have the strength that is needed to command obedience, so they are forced to tell lies that will trick people into obeying them. Thus, priestly deception always has its origin in the priestly type's weakness and impotence. Moreover, as he announces at the start of *The Antichrist*, everything that comes from weakness is bad (A 2, 57). Thus, Nietzsche doesn't object to lying in general, or on moral grounds, or because he is driven by the ascetic will to truth, or because he thinks priestly lying always has bad consequences. He only criticizes the kind of deception, like the priests', that is motivated by weakness and impotence, and he does so on the grounds that it contradicts his power-centered values. Elsewhere he praises lies, deception, and manipulation that are inspired by strength and power—as for example with Machiavelli's paradigm princely warrior type, Cesare Borgia (A 46, 61).

5 Philosophical virtues and priestly philosophers

According to Nietzsche, there has always been a close relationship between the priestly and philosophical types of human beings. Among nearly all peoples, he writes, the philosopher has been just a further development of the priestly type (A 12). Here Nietzsche is alluding back to his account in GM of the historical emergence of philosophers (GM III: 5–10). From the start, he argues, philosophers were dealing with emergency conditions in which their survival was imperiled because their typical drives and virtues posed a danger to the established society and its traditions:

> Draw up a list of the separate drives and virtues of the philosophers—their drive to doubt, their drive to deny, their ("ephectic") drive to wait and see, their drive to analyze, their drive to investigate, to seek, to dare, their drive

> to compare, to balance, their will to neutrality and objectivity, their will to every "***sine** ira et studio*"—is it not already sufficiently clear that for the longest time all of them contravened the basic demands of morality and conscience? (not to mention *reason* generally, which Luther loved to call "Mistress Clever the clever whore"). That a philosopher, if he *were* to become aware of himself, would have been compelled to feel himself to be precisely the embodiment of "*nitimur in **vetitum***"—and consequently *guarded against* "feeling himself," against becoming aware of himself? (GM III: 9)

Thus, in order to be able to exist at all, philosophers had to avoid self-awareness and to pretend to themselves and to others that they were something other than what they were. More specifically, Nietzsche writes, "at first the philosophical spirit always had to use as a disguise and cocoon the *previously established* types of the contemplative human being—as priest, magician, soothsayer, in general as a religious human being" (GM III: 10). This priestly camouflage served philosophers well because both types share similar ascetic tendencies and preferences. For example, they both tend to be hermits, they both tend to be chaste, and they both have little taste for fame and luxury. But Nietzsche is quick to point out that the two types have very different reasons for their ascetic orientations. In the case of the priestly type, these represent a misguided idea of a remedy for their illness (GM I: 6) and a genuine rejection of the real world in favor of a mendaciously fabricated world. But in the case of the philosophical type, these represent its "optimum of favorable conditions under which it can completely expend its strength and achieve its maximal feeling of power" (GM III: 7). In choosing an ascetic lifestyle, philosophers are not rejecting the real world, but are rather simply affirming themselves—their independence, their freedom, their creative work (GM III: 7–8).

Nevertheless, Nietzsche argues, from the beginning of history until the most modern times, the philosophers' will to survive has required them to convince themselves and others that their typical ascetic inclinations were exactly the same as those of the priests: "[*T*]*he [priestly] ascetic ideal* for a long time served philosophers as a form in which to appear, as a precondition of existence—they had to *represent* it so as to be able to be philosophers, they had to *believe* in it so as to be able to represent it" (GM III: 10). Notice Nietzsche's emphasis here on the philosopher's need to believe in the priestly ascetic ideal so as to be able to be a philosopher. This is important because it means that most philosophers throughout history who succeeded in being philosophers were *priestly* philosophers, that is, philosophers who *believed in* the *priest's reasons*

for their ascetic orientations. Thus, the emergency conditions surrounding the historical emergence of philosophers were the same conditions that led to the emergence of priestly philosophers who misunderstood themselves and their own reasons for having ascetic inclinations:

> The characteristic aloof stance of philosophers, world-denying, hostile to life, disbelieving the senses, de-sensualized, a stance which has been maintained into the most recent times and in the process almost gained currency as *the philosophical attitude as such*—it is above all a result of the emergency conditions under which philosophy emerged and survived at all: since for the longest time philosophy *would not have been possible at all* on earth without an ascetic wrap and cloak, without an ascetic self-misunderstanding. (GM III: 10)

It is only now, Nietzsche writes, in the most modern times, that it is perhaps finally possible that philosophers like himself (A 1, 13, 36) are able to leave behind their grim and repulsive priestly cocoons and unveil themselves as what they really are:

> Has this really *changed*? Has the colorful and dangerous winged creature, that "spirit" which this caterpillar concealed within itself, really been defrocked at last and released into the light, thanks to a sunnier, warmer, brighter world? Has enough pride, daring, courage, self-confidence, will of the spirit, will to responsibility, *freedom of will* already become available today, so that henceforth on earth "the philosopher" is really—*possible*? (GM III: 10)

On Nietzsche's account, then, the history of philosophy is a record of several layers of self-deception. In order to survive, philosophers convinced themselves that they were priests. And to do this properly, they convinced themselves that the priests' self-deceiving beliefs were true. Nevertheless, the figures in this history were still philosophers, not priests, and they possessed all the appropriate philosophical drives and virtues. Priestly philosophers were different than priests because priests don't question, doubt, criticize, analyze, investigate, reason, prove, or refute. But they were also different than true philosophers because they did not employ these drives and virtues for their own sake, but only to defend the priestly lies which they needed to believe while camouflaged as priests. Thus, instead of questioning, doubting, criticizing, and denying the priestly lies of supernatural beings and alternative realities, priestly philosophers aimed to prove these lies and to refute the doubts of anyone who challenged these lies. Similarly, instead of asserting and promoting the value of their own intellectual capacities, priestly philosophers were led to question, doubt, criticize, deny, and refute this value.

In this way, Nietzsche suggests, philosophers who internalized their protective priestly facade also absorbed the *priestly* type's anti-intellectualism and became *philosophical* anti-intellectuals. To be sure, this new kind of anti-intellectualism was somewhat dangerous for the priests, since the attempt to prove the priestly lies also raised questions about the veracity of these lies and stimulated a competitive urge to refute these proofs. But this development was also incredibly useful for the priests because the priestly philosophers were now challenging, undermining, and corrupting their own dangerous gifts and talents. On their own, priests would have been easily defeated by the critical abilities and passions of true philosophers. But with the help of the co-opted priestly philosophers who criticized their own kind, the priests obtained an incredibly effective means of countering this threat and of extending their power further than ever before. In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche mentions this kind of alliance as structures of philosophical-priestly dominion (*philosophisch-priesterlichen Herrschafts-Gebilde*) (A 55).

6 Kant the priestly philosopher

Returning now to Kant, we can see why Nietzsche thinks he was a priestly philosopher. In fact, in both places where he offers his account of the priestly philosopher, Nietzsche cites Kant as his chief example. After finishing his account in GM, he imagines what it would be like if ascetic priest's "incarnate will to contradiction" were induced to philosophize. He then offers two illustrations, the ascetics of the Vedanta philosophy and Kant:

> For example, like the ascetics of the Vedanta philosophy, it will downgrade physicality to an illusion; likewise pain, multiplicity, the whole conceptual antithesis "subject" and "object"—errors, nothing but errors! To renounce belief in one's ego, to deny one's own "reality"—what a triumph!—now no longer merely over the senses, over what appears to the eyes, but a much higher kind of triumph, a violation and cruelty against *reason:* a voluptuous delight that reaches its pinnacle when reason's ascetic self-contempt, self-mockery decrees: "there *is* a realm of truth and of being, but reason is *excluded* from it!" . . . (Incidentally: even in the Kantian concept of the "intelligible character of things" something remains of this lascivious ascetic discord that loves to turn reason against reason: for "intelligible character" signifies in Kant that things are so constituted that the intellect comprehends just enough of them to know that for the intellect they are—*utterly incomprehensible*.) (GM III: 12)

Nietzsche's critique of Kant here is not as pointed, as extensive, or as profound as his later remarks in *The Antichrist*. Nevertheless, with his account of the Vedanta philosophy, he offers a clear parallel to Kant's strategy in the first Critique of protecting the priestly fabrication of a "true" supernatural world of religion and morality by inventing a theory of "critical" idealism that downgrades everything in the natural world to an arrangement of mental representations. In response to this comparison, Kant would say that he hasn't shown the actual world to be a mere illusion, as the priestly philosopher "bishop Berkeley" did with his empiricist subjective idealism. He would say that he was concerned with *a priori* representations like space and time that are necessarily shared by all human beings (A28–30/B44–45, B69–71). So Nietzsche should argue more precisely that Kant, as a priestly philosopher, downgrades the actual world to a collectively experienced virtual reality.

In this passage, Nietzsche also describes Kant's philosophical anti-intellectualism. As we have seen, the ascetic priests are anti-intellectual in the sense that they fear and despise human reason as a kind of threat to the priestly lies that enable them to stay in power. But they are not philosophers, so they don't express this anti-intellectualism in intellectual terms. This is where Kant, the priestly philosopher, makes an innovation: his philosophical inclinations lead him to use reason, but his priestly indoctrination leads him to turn this reason against itself. As Nietzsche puts it, Kant uses his reason to argue that the human intellect comprehends just enough about the "real" world to know that it cannot comprehend anything about it. In this way, the priestly philosopher employs his philosophical propensity, in a self-mocking and self-contemptuous fashion, to reinforce the priests' prohibition against the human intellect knowing anything about the fictitious supernatural world they have invented.[8]

The other place where Nietzsche cites Kant as his best example of the priestly philosopher is the section in *The Antichrist* where he says that among nearly all peoples the philosopher is merely the next development of the priestly type (A 12). What he means by this, as we have seen, is somewhat complicated. He means, first of all, that the priestly type preexisted the historical emergence of philosophers. And, second, he means that philosophers took on the protective camouflage of this priestly type so that their natural skeptical tendencies would not seem threatening to the established order. In this section, Nietzsche contrasts "a few skeptics—the decent type in the history of philosophy" with Kant and the rest of the canonical figures—all of whom, he claims, "are ignorant of the basic requirements of intellectual integrity." Nietzsche's suggestion here

is that true philosophers like himself no longer believe in the priestly lies that came along with their priestly disguise. They are decent and intellectually honest because their natural skeptical tendencies are no longer being used to defend these priestly lies but rather to investigate, expose, and refute them. Later in *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche reintroduces these intellectually honest philosophers, identifying them with "strong, emancipated intellectuals" (*des starken, des freigewordnen Geistes*) and even with his alter ego Zarathustra:[9]

> One should not let oneself be misled: great intellectuals are skeptics. Zarathustra is a skeptic. The strength, the *freedom* that comes from the strength and superstrength of the mind, *proves* itself through skepticism. [. . .] An intellectual who wants greatness, who also wills the means to it, is necessarily a skeptic. Freedom from every sort of conviction is *part* of strength, being *able* to see freely . . . . Grand passion, the foundation and the force of his being, even more enlightened, even more despotic than he is himself, takes his whole intellect [*Intellekt*] into its service; it makes him unhesitating; it gives him the courage even for unholy means; it *allows* him convictions under certain circumstances. Conviction as a *means*: there is much that is achieved only by means of a conviction. Grand passion uses, uses up convictions, it does not submit to them—it knows itself sovereign. (A 54)[10]

Here, that is, Nietzsche implies that Kant and the rest of the canonical philosophers remained priestly because they did not have the strength of mind needed to be able to see freely and because they did not have the grand passion that would put their whole intellect to use.[11] In the rest of this section, Nietzsche implies further that these philosophers were actually weak-minded and weak-willed and that this is why they continued to need their faith and their obedience to the priestly rule.[12] They were dependent and self-abnegating philosophers who prospered under priestly compulsion and who needed priests to use them up as a means. So they were always on the side of priests no matter what and they had a strict and necessary priestly perspective in all questions of value. Instead of unleashing their natural skeptical talents and freeing themselves from their self-imposed bondage to priestly lies, they became advocates of these priestly lies and enemies of the truth.

7 Kant's criticism versus Hume's skepticism

Nietzsche's praise of philosophical skeptics might seem odd in connection with his earlier description of Kant as a kind of skeptic (A 10). But, as we have seen,

this earlier description refers to a kind of skepticism that can be traced back to Kant's Protestant obsession with irrefutability. We should also recall that Kant's most important skeptical opponent in the *Critique* is his Enlightenment counterpart, David Hume (A764–68/B792–96). In the context of Nietzsche's critique, we should therefore read this book as a struggle for power between the corrupted skepticism of the priestly philosopher Kant and the liberated skepticism of the genuine philosopher Hume.[13] In this book, that is, Kant initiates a systematic "critical" doubt regarding the pioneering doubts raised by Hume against the foundations of the Christian belief system (A758–64/B786–92).[14] This strategy comes into play explicitly in the second half of the *Critique* that is devoted to the transcendental ideas of God, freedom, and immortality. But the strategy also informs the first half of the book, insofar as Kant's arguments in the second half rely on his earlier results. Or rather, as Nietzsche would say, these earlier results were concocted by Kant with his later strategy in mind (D P: 3; TI "Skirmishes" 16).

With respect to the transcendental idea of God, Kant rehearses Hume's skeptical critique of the argument from design.[15] His direct response is that this critique is successful if it is targeted at a misguided empirical conception of God, but that it cannot in any way affect the properly metaphysical conception of a God that is inaccessible to human experience. Or, put in Nietzsche's terms, Kant simply reasserts the priestly lie of some kind of incomprehensible supernatural existence in order to refute Hume's naturalistic doubts about the anthropomorphic features of a divine creator and ruler of the universe. At a deeper level, Nietzsche would argue, Kant is especially concerned to cut off the skeptical suspicion that the impotent and weak-minded Judeo-Christian priests have projected themselves into the figure of an omnipotent and omniscient supernatural ruler who commands total obedience to their own priestly rule.[16] The cost of this defensive strategy for Kant is that he must concede to Hume that it is impossible to prove such an incomprehensible supernatural existence. Of course, for Hume the choice between a flawed anthropomorphic God and a perfect incomprehensible God is supposed to pose a fatal dilemma for the argument from design. But Kant is happy to pick the latter horn and even to join Hume's further skeptical efforts to undermine the two most celebrated *a priori* proofs of God's existence, the ontological and cosmological arguments (A592–620/B620–48). As Nietzsche writes in *The Antichrist*, Kant's success here is merely a Protestant theologian's success: thanks to his wily and shrewd skepticism, God's existence, if not provable, is at least no longer refutable (A 10). Thus, as a priestly philosopher, Kant's anti-intellectual skepticism leads him

to argue that the priestly lie of a supernatural guarantor of priestly power is immune to any rational treatment and therefore safe from Hume's irreligious skeptical assaults.

With respect to the transcendental idea of immortality, Kant reviews Hume's skeptical critique of the claims that there exists an immaterial human soul, that this soul is separable from the body and can survive the body's death, and that this soul will be appropriately rewarded and punished in some eternal future state. Kant's response is that Hume's critique is successful if by the human soul we mean, as Hume does, the object of psychological introspection. But he argues that this is not at all what we should mean when we speak of these various doctrines, but rather only the metaphysical self, the "intelligible character," which is inaccessible to human experience and therefore irrefutable. Or, put in Nietzsche's terms, Kant simply reasserts the priests' lie that their followers have supernatural souls which survive the death of their bodies in order to be eternally rewarded or punished in accordance with their obedience to the priestly rule during their earthly lives. At a deeper level, Nietzsche would argue, Kant is especially concerned to divert the skeptical suspicion that the impotent priests have simply invented a fictional means of enticing and threatening their followers into self-monitoring obedience. This is because they have no way to keep track of all their followers' thoughts and actions and no way to appropriately reward or punish their follower's selves and bodies while they are alive.[17] Hume hints at this point in his essay on the immortality of the soul:

> There arise, indeed, in some minds, some unaccountable terrors with regard to futurity: But these would quickly vanish, were they not artificially fostered by precept and education. And those, who foster them; what is their motive? Only to gain a livelihood, and to acquire power and riches in this world. Their very zeal and industry, therefore, are an argument against them. (Hume 1985: 599)

Nietzsche makes the same point much more explicitly in *The Antichrist*: "'[I] mmortality of the soul,' the 'soul' itself; they are instruments of torture, they are systems of cruelties by virtue of which the priest became master, remained master" (A 38; also A 41–43). Again, the cost of this defensive strategy for Kant is that he must concede to Hume that it is impossible to prove any of these claims about the human soul. But, again, Kant is happy to do this, and he is happy to join Hume in his efforts to undermine all past *a priori* attempts to prove these claims. And again, thanks to his wily and shrewd skepticism, Kant argues that these claims, if not provable, are at least no longer refutable (A741–42/B769–70). Which means, in Nietzsche's terms, that Kant, the priestly philosopher,

was determined to use his enslaved skeptical intellect to safeguard the levers of priestly power from the assaults of Hume's liberated skeptical intellect.

8 Hume's interruption of Kant's dogmatic slumber

Freedom is the third transcendental idea and, in Kant's view, the most endangered by Hume's skeptical doubts. This is because Kant thinks that freedom means a different kind of causality than the causality of nature.[18] In his Preface to the *Prolegomena*, Kant famously says that Hume's doubt about causality awoke him from his dogmatic slumber (cf. also A757/B785). The surface meaning of this remark, as he explains, is that he had always taken for granted the idea that we can have knowledge about the world independently of experience. So Hume's doubt about our *a priori* causal knowledge led him to wonder about all the rest of our claims to such *a priori* knowledge and from there to conceive his idea of a critique of pure reason (B4–5, B19–20, A760/B788). However, with Nietzsche's critique in mind, we can now understand Kant's famous remark to have a deeper underlying meaning that does indeed specifically concern the issue of causality. What Kant really meant is that he was feeling secure about his religious and moral convictions until the moment when he encountered Hume's skeptical doubt about any kind of causality other than the one we derive from experience. This is because his entire system of Christian beliefs depends on the priestly lie of an imaginary causality that can never be derived from experience. As Nietzsche writes in *The Antichrist*,

> In Christianity neither morality nor religion come into contact with reality at any point. Nothing but imaginary *causes* ("God," "soul," "I," "spirit," "free will"—or even "unfree will"); nothing but imaginary *effects* ("sin," "redemption," "grace," "punishment," "forgiveness of sins"). Relations between imaginary *beings* ("God," "spirits," "souls"); an imaginary *natural* science (anthropocentric; total absence of the concept of natural causes). (A 15)

In fact, Nietzsche argues, the Christian priestly lie about God dispensing rewards and punishments to morally free agents was invented in opposition to all previous conceptions of natural causality and in support of a new kind of "anti-natural" causality that then undergirds everything else that is unnatural:

> [The concept of God] becomes a tool in the hands of priestly agitators, who now interpret all happiness as reward, all unhappiness as punishment for disobeying

> God, for "sin": that most mendacious mode of interpretation, of a supposed "moral world order," through which the natural concept, "cause" and "effect," is turned upside down once and for all. When they use reward and punishment to purge natural causality from the world, they then need an *anti-natural* causality: now everything else that is unnatural follows. (A 25)

Thus, Nietzsche would argue, Kant understood what the first Judeo-Christian priests warned about at the start of their Bible—that the one great danger to the entire edifice of Christian priestly lies would be the restoration of a sound and scientific conception of causality:

> The beginning of the Bible contains the *entire* psychology of the priest.—The priest knows only the one great danger: that is science—the sound concept of cause and effect. [. . .] The concept of guilt and punishment, including the doctrine of "grace," of "redemption," of "forgiveness"—*lies* through and through and without any psychological reality—were invented to destroy people's *causal sense*: they are an attempt to assassinate the concept of cause and effect! [. . .] When the natural consequences of an action are no longer "natural," but are rather conceived as effected by the conceptual specters of superstition, by "God," by "spirits," by "souls," as exclusively "moral" consequences, as reward, punishment, warning, lesson, then the precondition of knowledge has been destroyed—*then the greatest crime against humanity has been committed*. (A 49; cf. also TI "Errors" 1, 2 and 6)

What so alarmed Kant, then, is the fact that Hume had used his philosophical propensity for skeptical questioning to liberate himself from the priestly lie of anti-natural causality. From Kant's perspective as a priestly philosopher, Hume's effort to reinstate a purely experiential concept of causality was a dagger aimed at the heart of the Christian system of priestly deceptions. This is the secret reason why Kant was so proud of his "refutation" of Hume's doubt (*Prolegomena* §§27–30).[19] Using his own philosophical talent for skeptical analysis, Kant challenged Hume's experiential derivation of causality by introducing an *a priori* concept of causality that dictates the necessary and irreversible temporal order of our mental representations (A189–211/B232–56). But this *a priori* concept can apply only to our collectively experienced virtual reality. So the causality of nature that we experience, and that science formulates as a law, can never concern the world as it really is. This means that neither experience nor science can contradict or refute the transcendental idea that a person's timeless "intelligible character" is free to act in such a way that it can be praised or blamed for the morality of its actions.[20] Hence the causality of freedom lies beyond the

limits of human reason and beyond the possibility of refutation. Again, in line with his wily and shrewd skepticism, Kant is eager to add that this also means that the transcendental idea of freedom can never be rationally demonstrated. But he argues that this is not a problem, because our consciousness of morality's authority is all that is needed to show the reality of this idea (Bxxv–xxix, A806–808/B833–36). In reply, Nietzsche would, of course, challenge Kant's conviction that we must recognize and admit this authority. He would argue that Kant's supposedly universal and ahistorical morality was actually a system of vengeful values mendaciously fabricated by the Hebrew priests of antiquity (GM I; A 24–25, 45).

9 Kant's moral theology

As a result of these three skeptical rebuttals of Hume's skeptical challenges, the priestly philosopher Kant feels that he is entitled to conclude the whole *Critique of Pure Reason* with the following "moral theology" (*Moraltheologie*) that unifies his three transcendental ideas of God, freedom, and immortality:[21]

> Morality, by itself, constitutes a system. Happiness, however, does not do so, save in so far as it is distributed in exact proportion to morality. But this is possible only in the intelligible world, under a wise author and ruler. Such a ruler, together with life in such a world, which we must regard as a future world, reason finds itself constrained to assume; otherwise it would have to regard the moral laws as empty figments of the brain, since without this postulate the necessary consequence which it itself connects with these laws could not follow. Hence also everyone regards the moral laws as commands; and this the moral laws could not be if they did not connect a priori suitable consequences with their rules, and thus carry with them promises and threats. But this again they could not do, if they did not reside in a necessary being, as the supreme good, which alone can make such a purposive unity possible. (A811–12/B839–40)

Put in Nietzsche's terms, Kant's moral theology is his philosophical representation of the ideological mechanism whereby priests ensure their followers' obedience. The moral laws are, of course, whatever the priests command. But the priests know that their commands have no authority unless they are accompanied by promises of happiness delivered, or threats of happiness withheld, in exact correspondence to their followers' obedience or disobedience. Since the priests don't have the knowledge or the power to

guarantee this kind of reward or punishment in real life, they convince their followers that an omniscient and omnipotent projection of themselves will guarantee this in a fictional future world. Also, it is important to priests that their followers don't feel oppressed by their commands. So they convince them that their obedience is actually freedom, especially when it contradicts their own desires. Kant even imagines the case of a person who is completely indifferent to all moral laws and argues that "enough remains to make him fear the existence of a divine being and a future life." This is because such a man "at least cannot pretend that there is any certainty that there is no such being and no such future life" since "he would have to prove the impossibility of both, which assuredly no reasonable person can undertake to do" (A829–30/B857–58). Or, put in Nietzsche's terms, as long as the priests are convincing enough with their fictional threats, they can at least instill fear in those who are reluctant to recognize their authority.

Having explained this all-important concluding moral theology, Kant considers a potential complaint about the incredibly difficult intellectual work he has just finished in the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

> But, it will be said, is this all that pure reason achieves in opening up prospects beyond the limits of experience? nothing more than two articles of belief [in God and a future life]? surely the common understanding could have achieved as much, without appealing to philosophers for counsel in the matter!

Kant's surprising answer provides strong evidence for Nietzsche's theory about the priestly character of his philosophy:

> Do you really require that an item of knowledge which concerns all people should transcend the common understanding, and should only be revealed to you by philosophers? Precisely what you find fault with is the best confirmation of the correctness of the above assertions. For we have thereby revealed to us, what could not at the start have been foreseen, namely, that in matters which concern all people without distinction nature is not guilty of any partial distribution of her gifts, and that in regard to the essential ends of human nature the highest philosophy cannot advance further than is possible under the guidance which nature has bestowed even upon the most ordinary understanding. (A830–31/B858–59)

Here, that is, Kant reveals two key features of his anti-intellectualist conception of philosophy. The first is that philosophy's most important function is to serve the interests of religion and morality (that is, the ruling interests of the priests)

and that the best way it can do this is to defend religious and moral beliefs (that is, priestly lies and commands) by throwing skeptical doubt on any skeptical criticism of these beliefs. In other words, the primary mission of philosophy is to protect the priestly rule from philosophy. What this means, then, is that all of philosophy's intellectual work, including Kant's, derives its value from the role it can play in defending religion and morality from precisely this kind of intellectual work. Hence Kant's second point above, that when it comes to the most important matters, even the very best philosopher can do no better, and has no more special aptitude, than the most ordinary human intellect.[22]

10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined Nietzsche's genealogical framework for understanding Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as an expression of priestly philosophy. The focus of this framework is Kant's strategy for rendering his religious beliefs irrefutable. According to Nietzsche, these beliefs and this obsession with irrefutability can be traced back to Kant's Protestant faith. But Kant didn't understand, or didn't want to understand, that his religious beliefs were all lies invented by priests to help them secure and maintain their power over their followers. They were lies about a supernatural world inhabited by an omnipotent and omniscient supernatural ruler who dispenses a reward of supernatural happiness to the supernatural souls of the priests' followers in exchange for their "freely" chosen "moral" obedience to the priestly rule. To protect these lies from being exposed, the priests told a further lie in which the supernatural ruler prohibits any skeptical thinking on the part of human beings—especially with respect to the subject matter of the priestly lies. According to Nietzsche, the reason Kant believed in these lies can be traced back to the historical emergence of priestly philosophers—that is, philosophers who had to pretend to be priests in order to survive. Some philosophers, like David Hume, were strong enough that their skeptical talents allowed them to see through the priestly lies that came with this pretense. But others were too weak and weak-willed to liberate their own minds, so they turned their skeptical skills and virtues toward the task of defending their priestly convictions. In Kant's case, this defense consisted in the anti-intellectualist idea of having human reason prohibit itself from pursuing any inquiry into the priestly lies. Indeed, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, we find Kant using just such a defensive

strategy against Hume's skeptical challenges to the priestly lies about God, freedom, and immortality. By convincing philosophers like Hume to monitor, censor, and even disable their own stronger skeptical talents, Kant hoped to come out on top as their critical judge and philosophical master (A751–54/B779–82). Despite his intricate, subtle, and sophisticated argumentative skills, Kant simply did not have the strength, curiosity, or courage to see through the priestly lies he had inherited and internalized. Or perhaps he needed to believe in these lies just like the priests did, because he was just as unhealthy and impotent as they were.

This critique of Kant's priestly philosophy offers us some important insights into Nietzsche's view of the relation between philosophy and religion. When Kant says that he needed to deny knowledge to make room for faith, this is usually interpreted as his attempt to reconcile the competing claims of philosophy and science, on the one hand, and religion and morality, on the other. On this reading, Kant was not joining the counter-Enlightenment movement, or initiating a new backlash against the Enlightenment, but simply moderating its critical scope so as to do justice to the claims of both sides.[23] But Nietzsche rejects this reading altogether. He argues that Kant's denial of knowledge is much more radical than it looks and is in fact a complete capitulation to the priestly demands of religion and morality.[24] Not only does Kant foreclose the possibility of any philosophical or scientific questioning of these priestly demands, he also downgrades the status of all existing philosophical and scientific knowledge to mere idealism.

According to Nietzsche, and he thinks Kant believed this too, the contest between the competing claims of philosophy-science and religion-morality is actually a zero-sum game. Any gain on one side is a loss for the other side, so there is no way to balance or moderate this contest. In Nietzsche's view, the only reason there appears to be some kind of common ground between religion and philosophy is that religion served for a while as a kind of protective cocoon that allowed philosophy to emerge, flourish, and come into its own. During that time of survival and growth, there was a preponderance of weak-willed philosophers like Kant who saw their interests as allied with those of the priests whose lies they had internalized. But a few stronger-minded philosophers like Descartes and Hume had already begun to exercise their skeptical drives so as to emancipate themselves from this inherited priestly influence. This is why the Renaissance and the Enlightenment saw a dramatic reconfiguration in the relation between religion and philosophy. Now that philosophy no longer needed to conceal its talents and ambitions, it was ready to go to war against its

former ally in order to bring new wisdom and new values into the world. In his earlier book, *Dawn*, Nietzsche argues that the Germans and German philosophy were a special danger during this turbulent period, especially Kant with his task of making room for faith by placing limits on knowledge. But looking back now from the standpoint of his own philosophy, Nietzsche finds that he is able to breathe freely again. He sees that the hour of this danger has passed and that the very spirits conjured up by these Germans have in the long run become new and stronger genii of that very Enlightenment against which they were first conjured up. Indeed, he sees that his own philosophy is inspired by these new and stronger genii and that it is his task to continue surging forward on the great tide of the Enlightenment (D 197).

Two final questions. In the first place, Nietzsche's critique, as I have outlined it above, will certainly seem unfair and excessive to admirers of Kant and his preeminent place in the history of philosophy. Doesn't everyone agree that Kant made some fundamental discoveries in his first Critique, as for example in his ideas about the workings of the human mind that are now incorporated into contemporary cognitive science? In response, Nietzsche would most likely say that we are simply wrong to admire Kant so much and that we need to initiate a drastic reappraisal of his place in the history of philosophy. If Kant's "critical" idealism is just a theological ploy, if his idea of a critique of pure reason is simply a Protestant injunction against the intellectual progress of the Enlightenment, and if his "critical" defense of religious dogmas is merely a reassertion of his Protestant faith in the face of overwhelming refutations—then why should we continue to admire his philosophy? As for the example just mentioned, Nietzsche would say it is patently absurd that Kant's psychological account of the human mind presupposes his theologically inspired claims that time and causality do not exist in the real world. This is why those who look for Kant's influence in contemporary cognitive science begin by explaining why we need to jettison these idealist claims.[25] But of course these are the claims that Kant believed were his most important contributions; so it's not clear why we should say that this contemporary research is indebted to his philosophical discoveries. In other words, Nietzsche might argue, a priestly philosopher like Kant would not recognize his influence on later naturalistic thinkers because he was concerned to falsify, devalue, and negate the reality that is simply taken for granted by these researchers.

But wasn't Nietzsche himself decisively influenced by Kant's first Critique, especially through his close study of Kantian and neo-Kantian philosophers

like Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Albert Lange, and Afrikan Spir? Yes, but it's also true that Nietzsche's philosophical development was marked by an intensified focus on Christianity and by an escalating hostility toward this religion and its influence on philosophy. His 1886 preface to his first work, BT, shows this trajectory perhaps better than anything else he wrote (BT P: 5). Besides, as we have seen, Nietzsche came to believe in the end that Kant's success was just the success of a Protestant theologian. In this chapter, I have argued that Nietzsche would point to the text of *The Antichrist* as evidence of his final and definitive emancipation from Kant's influence. Because he concludes his career with a total rejection of Christianity and all of its priestly philosophical legacy, Nietzsche's final outlook in all matters should be regarded as resolutely anti-Kantian. To be anti-Christian is to be anti-Kantian.

Notes

1 Except for a few minor modifications, I have followed Norman Kemp Smith's translation of Kant's first critique.

2 Independently of Nietzsche's reading of Kant, I think there are good reasons for accepting the traditional interpretation of Kant as a phenomenalistic idealist about the objects of human experience (cf. Van Cleve 1999). In my view, Lucy Allais's well-received recent arguments against this traditional interpretation (Allais 2015: 37–58) depend too heavily on her assimilation of phenomenalistic idealism to Berkeley's solipsistic idealism. They don't take into account Kant's distinctive claim, *contra* Berkeley's empiricist standpoint, that our *a priori* representations allow us to share a collective and intersubjective phenomenal experience (which he calls "empirical reality") (A26–30/B42–45, A45–46/B62–63).

3 Throughout this chapter I have consulted the standard English translations of Nietzsche's works.

4 See also TI "Skirmishes" 16 where Nietzsche cites Kant's "backdoor philosophy," and TI "Reason" 6: "*Fourth proposition*. To divide the world into a 'true' and an 'apparent' world, whether in the manner of Christianity, or in the manner of Kant (which is, after all, that of a *sneaky* Christian), is just a sign of *décadence*—a symptom of life in *decline* . . ."

5 See also TI "True World" 3: "The true world, unattainable, unprovable, unpromisable, but the mere thought of it a consolation, an obligation, an imperative. (Basically the old sun, but through mist and skepticism; the idea become sublime, pale, nordic, königsbergian.)" Here Nietzsche refers to Kant's claim that, although human beings cannot *know* anything about the true world,

they are nevertheless able to *think* about it because the representation of it is at least not self-contradictory (Bxxvi–xxx).

6 Nietzsche argues that this is also a goal of the priestly laws of Manu in which followers are trained to attain the perfect automatism of instinct (A 57).

7 See also TI "Morality" 6 where Nietzsche writes of "the holy lunacy of priests, the *diseased* reason in priests."

8 In his 1886 preface to his earlier book *Dawn*, Nietzsche points out the absurdity of Kant's demand that an instrument of our drives and passions should criticize itself: "(—and, come to think of it, wasn't it somewhat peculiar to demand that an instrument should critique its own excellence and suitability? that the intellect itself should 'know' its own worth, its own capacity, its own limits? was it not even a little absurd?)" (D P:3).

9 Notice that when Nietzsche is emphasizing and praising the philosopher's skeptical tendencies here and in GM III: 9, he is doing so on behalf of his assault on Christianity. *Pace* Berry's suggestion (2011: 9–14, 137–38, 208, 210 n. 2), I don't think that we should infer that in these passages Nietzsche is *defining* genuine philosophers as skeptics. In BGE 211, Nietzsche indicates that even skeptics of the stronger German sort are philosophical laborers and instruments for the full-fledged genuine philosophers who have the great health and power that is needed for the essential philosophical task of creating, legislating, and commanding values.

10 Although Nietzsche's important terms, "*Geist*" and "*Geister,*" usually include affective dimensions, the context of his use of these terms here and in some of the surrounding passages indicates a narrower focus on the intellectual connotations of the terms. My translation of these terms follows R. J. Hollingdale.

11 "And philosophers seconded the church: the *lie* of 'the moral world order' runs through the entire development even of more modern philosophy" (A 26).

12 Cf. D 481: "When he does shine through his thoughts, Kant appears noble and honorable in the best sense, but insignificant: he lacks breadth and power; he did not experience very much, and his way of working deprived him of the *time* in which to experience something—I am thinking, of course, not of crude 'events' impinging from without, but of the vicissitudes and convulsions which befall the most solitary and quiet life that has leisure and that burns with the passion of thinking."

13 Notice that this is only supposed to be a comparative evaluation of the two philosophers. Compared to Kant, Nietzsche would argue, Hume was the stronger philosopher. But in his discussion of skeptics in Part VI of BGE, Nietzsche implies that philosophers like Hume are weaker than philosophers like himself who extend their skeptical challenge to morality and who go beyond mere skepticism to create, legislate, and command values.

14 For an overview and summary of Hume's irreligious doubts, see Russell and Kraal (2017).

15 A620–42/B648–70, A745–46/B773–74.

16 As Kant writes, "This [divine] will must be omnipotent, in order that the whole of nature and its relation to morality in the world may be subject to it; omniscient, that he may know the innermost sentiments and their moral worth; omnipresent, that he may be immediately at hand for the satisfying of every need which the highest world's best demands; eternal, that this harmony of nature and freedom may never fail, etc." (A815/B843).

17 As Kant puts it, "[W]e must assume that moral world to be a consequence of our conduct in the world of sense (in which no such connection between worthiness and happiness is exhibited), and therefore to be for us a future world" (A811/B839).

18 A444–51/B472–79, A532–58/B561–86.

19 Nietzsche's earlier remarks in GS 357 present a very different understanding and appraisal of Kant's response to Hume's doubt and of the validity and value of scientific causal knowledge. Since Nietzsche's thought was evolving very quickly during this time, I think we should assume that his discussion of Kant and causality in *The Antichrist* presents his final and definitive thoughts on these matters.

20 See also TI "Errors" 7 for Nietzsche's account of the priestly lie of "free will" as an instrument of judgment and punishment.

21 Kant refers to his moral theology at A632/B660, A641/B669, A814/B842, and A819/B847.

22 See GS 193: "*Kant's joke*—Kant wanted to prove in a way that would dumbfound the 'whole world' that the 'whole world' was right: that was the secret joke of this soul. He wrote against the scholars in favor of popular prejudice, but for scholars and not popularly."

23 Cf. Jonathan I. Israel: "It was in Kantianism, then, that *Aufklärung* and Christianity, reason and faith, were finally and decisively reconciled" (Israel 2011: 729).

24 Nietzsche would certainly challenge Kant's claim that his idea of a critique of pure reason embodies the critical and emancipatory spirit of the Age of Enlightenment. In his famous footnote on the "Age of Criticism" in the preface to the first edition of the first Critique, Kant says that religion should not seek to exempt itself from this kind of criticism. If it does, it will "awaken just suspicion, and cannot claim the sincere respect which reason accords only to that which has been able to sustain the test of free and open examination" (Axi). But why does Kant expect that religion will eventually earn the sincere respect of reason? And why does he proudly announce in his preface to the second edition that criticism alone can sever the root of a universally injurious atheism (Bxxxiv)?

25 For example, Patricia Kitcher remarks in her study of Kant's contribution to cognitive science: "If time is not real, then the accounts of the identity of a mind through time, and of the cognitive processes that enable us to have knowledge, are incoherent. . . . Under these circumstances I see no choice but to reject the metaphysical claim, which is, in any case, independently problematic" (Kitcher 1990: 141).

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6

Nietzsche's Quest for the Historical Jesus

Anthony K. Jensen

With his *Das Leben Jesu kritisch bearbeitet* (1835–36), David Friedrich Strauss revolutionized nineteenth-century biblical historiography. While the previous century saw battle between historical supernaturalists who took the miraculous character of the New Testament for literal fact and Enlightenment historiographers who read the miracles as prescientific interpretations of natural phenomena, Strauss argued that early Christian writers added the miraculous events as myths to satisfy Jewish Messianic prophecies.[1] Although respected among professional historians, Anthony Ashley-Cooper Earl of Shaftesbury voiced the popular reaction to this 'mythicist' reading, naming Strauss's *Life of Jesus* "the most pestilential book ever vomited out of the jaws of hell."[2]

By 1906, the rather less pestilential Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* would syncretize the debates arising from Strauss's 'mythicist' thesis with Christian Gottlob Wilke's revival of the "Markan priority" thesis[3] and the "two-source" or "Q" hypothesis of Christian Hermann Weisse and Heinrich Julius Holtzman.[4] Schweitzer's own interpretation involved a psychological analysis of the earliest historiographers of Jesus and their anxiety about an approaching apocalypse; later, as Christianity merged with the empire through what became a written tradition, the image of Jesus shifted for the purpose of establishing imperial authority; and by the twentieth century, Schweitzer could look back at the history of the Jesus figure as the product of hundreds of historians, each interpreting into a "Christ" their own interests and motivations.

Just a few years later, Schweitzer's psychology of historical interpretation would be challenged by the more radical Arthur Drews (1865–1935). In his *Die Christusmythe* (1909), which marks the end of what is now called the 'Old Quest',[5] Drews held the New Testament to be the construction of early Christians who relied upon a dangerously antiquated mode of mythologizing. Later

historians applied 'Great Man' romantic presumptions, foregoing the naturalist vision of Jesus himself for an idealized Messiah, the idolatry of whom retarded both the spiritual and social progress of humanity for centuries. The thesis of a historically real Jesus Christ, according to Drews, "is not only superfluous, but mischievous. It loads the religious consciousness with doubtful historical ballast; it grants the past an authority over the religious life of the present, and it prevents men from deducing the real consequences of their Monistic religious principles. Hence I insist that the belief in the historical reality of Jesus is the chief obstacle to religious progress . . ."[6] The quest for the historical Jesus thus reached the conclusion that there was in fact no 'Jesus' worth searching for.

What this brief historical excursus shows is that, despite his sister's worry that it would violate blasphemy laws,[7] Nietzsche's *Der Antichrist* was thematically quite at home in German historical and theological debates.[8] Its doubts about the historical accuracy of the Gospels' and Paul's portrayal of Jesus were among the reigning theses of biblical historiography. Nietzsche shares entirely Strauss's skepticism about the historical reliability of the New Testament, Schweitzer's tendency toward psychologism in examining the motivations of New Testament writers, and especially Drews's conviction that Jewish Messianic prophecies were grafted upon a mythical framework.[9] Granted, no other professional academic could have pulled off the shrilly exaggerated rhetoric of this 'curse' against Christianity, Nietzsche's 'mythicist' interpretation of the historical Jesus—compared to Drews—isn't even the most radical.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to elucidate and analyze Nietzsche's own 'Quest for the Historical Jesus' by using the comparative framework of contemporary historiography. With it, we will be in better position to analyze two of Nietzsche's central positions, namely, the character of the historical Jesus and the process by which the historical Jesus was turned into the Christ of the New Testament. Doing so makes clear that, while Nietzsche's deconstruction of the historical tradition about Jesus and St. Paul is mostly consistent with the 'historical quest' in theme and focus, his positive attributions of their 'real' motivations involve a historiographical method that wildly oversteps the boundaries of scholarship.

1 The historical Jesus

Nietzsche never comes to question the existence of a historical person named Jesus, as does, for example, Drews.[10] But Nietzsche does think that the entirety

of Christian historiography has fundamentally obfuscated who Jesus was as an historical person. "Christianity soaked up doctrines and rites from all the subterranean cults of the imperium Romanum and bits of nonsense from all kinds of sick reason" (A 37). As a result of this 'mythic' covering over, "[e]ven the word 'Christianity' is a misunderstanding—there was really only one Christian, and he died on the cross" (A 39). Worse still, "people have constructed the church out of the opposite of the evangel" (A 36). We will address 'how' the image of Jesus became so corrupted in the next section; for now, we will examine the 'who'. Nietzsche's argument takes two roads: a negative criticism of the depiction of Jesus inherited from the textual tradition and a positive or attributive reconstruction of who Jesus 'really' was. The negative strategy bears four theses that stand within the thematic debate of the 'Historical Quest' tradition: (1) that Jesus did not have doctrines, (2) that he could not have held any metaphysical positions, (3) that he was no hero or genius, and (4) that he was not a revolutionary. Nietzsche's positive strategy—which plainly oversteps the 'Historical Quest' tradition—will attribute to Jesus (5) a hyperbolic aversion of pain and (6) a parabolic-symbolic pattern of speech. His overarching claim in the quotations above—that Christianity constructed a church as the antithesis of the historical Jesus—depends on these two strands of argument.

From the start (1), Nietzsche distrusts most of the descriptions of Jesus's words and teachings, certainly those found in any works later than the Gospels. Consistent with other 'Historical Questers', two thousand years of church interpretation is also ruled out insofar as it is a roughly philosophical attempt to explicate the kind of normative code Nietzsche thinks would have been entirely foreign to Roman Judea. If Nietzsche is right, then any attempts to parse the true doctrines from heretical beliefs will falsify *a priori* the meaning of Jesus (A 38).[11] This thesis is concluded from two different arguments. Nietzsche holds both that philosophical-theological doctrines were superfluous to the affect Jesus had intended and that Jesus could not have issued doctrines due to a characteristic failing. The latter argument, which involves the positive attributions mentioned above (5 and 6), will be discussed below. With respect to superfluity here, Nietzsche writes: "What was called 'evangel' after that was the opposite of what he had lived: a 'bad tidings', a dysangel. It is false to the point of absurdity to think that Christians are characterized by their 'beliefs', like a belief in salvation through Christ: only the practice of Christianity is really Christian, living like the man who died on the cross" (A 39). Somewhat like Socrates or Diogenes, Jesus was a practical example of how to live.[12] Doctrines proving this or that

moral principle were thus superfluous for living the kind of '*Verhalten*' or behavior Jesus exemplified: a life that hallowed the name of 'our father', showed gratitude for our gifts, resisted temptation, and forgave trespasses.

> This bearer of "glad tidings" died the way he lived, the way he taught—not "to redeem humanity" but instead to show [*zeigen*] how people need to live. The practice [*Die Praktik*] is what he bequeathed to humanity: his behavior [*Verhalten*] towards the judges, towards the henchmen, the way he acted in the face of his accusers and every type of slander and derision—his behavior [*Verhalten*] on the cross. (A 35)

Jesus therefore did not need the sacred mystical "formulas" or "rites for interacting with God—or even prayer" (A 33). Consequently, "only the evangelical practice leads to God, in fact it is 'God'" (A 33). The person who could 'follow Jesus' in example if not in the letter of his 'doctrines', would live a fortunate life, a life characterized as 'blessed'. Since the disciples would never have needed doctrine beyond what they witnessed, any doctrinal attributions would have been superfluous. So far, though, that is all that Nietzsche is claiming. The stronger position, that doctrine would have been not only superfluous but impossible, will require Nietzsche to attribute the two positive characteristics, which, again, must be saved for below (5 and 6).

If possessing at least some kind of doctrine is the condition for erecting the kind of metaphysics needed to establish God's eternality, the age of the world, the immortality of the soul, the ontologically pregnant Jewish version of sin, then what falls out with them is the entire metaphysics of resurrection and redemption (2). Absent doctrinal metaphysics, Nietzsche thinks that Jesus's '*Verhalten*' would have been a model for the blessed natural life, not a sort of entry ticket into the afterlife. What such a life entailed was asceticism to the extent it cultivated health, embracing friends as brothers, affecting a gentleness toward women, not resisting those who wrong them, not distinguishing between foreigners and natives, or Jews and Gentiles, not getting angry, not condescending or belittling (A 33), and—perhaps the two most important for Nietzsche—understanding 'truths' as the expression of an inner reality (A 34) and ability to forgive (A 35). "What precisely was beneath him?—The feelings of blame, revenge, ressentiment" (A 40). This highest aspect of the blessed life is illustrated by Nietzsche's interpretation of Jesus's words to the thief on the cross. Typically construed as the promise of a supranatural salvation for the dying man, Nietzsche instead interprets Jesus's 'promise' as a naturalist description of the state of blessedness inherent in the one who could resist ressentiment

and blame, who could forgive his trespassers. "'That was a truly divine man', a 'child of God', said the thief. 'If this is how you feel', the redeemer replied, 'then you are in paradise this day, then you too are a child of God. . . .' Not to defend yourself, not to get angry, not to lay blame. . ." (A 35). So, there is certainly an ethic of sorts in Jesus, though not one that rests on appeal to either rational argument or special insight into an objective moral order. His moral code was based in what he intuited to be a naturally healthy personal psychological state, which when satisfied led to the unencumbered feeling of blessedness.

If the historical Jesus held no doctrines and served only as a personal exemplar, then he could not have been—as had been claimed by the greatest of the French 'Historical Questers,' Ernst Renan—any sort of romanticized hero (3).[13] Renan, with what Nietzsche names an "odious sort of psychological thoughtlessness," attributes to Jesus "the concept of genius and that of hero" (A 29). Renan's argument, or what Nietzsche makes of it,[14] was that whereas most New Testament stories were fabricated, the historical Jesus himself must have been a sort of 'cult of personality,' a Carlyle-styled 'Great Man,' in order to have inspired so many millions to his cause. To Nietzsche, on the contrary, Jesus was precisely the opposite of Renan's hero. A hero stands out from and above the crowd insofar as he is adversarial and becomes an enemy of the status quo by attempting to overcome it. But Jesus didn't attack or stand out—he "does not get angry, does not lay blame, does not defend itself: [he] does not brandish 'the sword'" (A 32)—so much as encourage others to see value in themselves. "Everyone is a child of God—Jesus did not claim any special privileges . . ." (A 29). As to his influence, Nietzsche denies Renan's romantic assumption that only great figures have the power to move history. GM features nameless protagonist 'herds', priests, or slaves altering the course of history dramatically by their sheer numbers and not any individual heroism. Here, too, Jesus need not to have been anyone particularly important for a mass of others to make something out of him.

This leads to the next criticism of the inherited tradition: Jesus could not have been a Jewish revolutionary trying to subvert the power of the Roman Empire (4). Indeed, Nietzsche thinks the historical Jesus would have been entirely ignorant of the global political order. The Gospels say precious little about the political machinations of Rome beyond the occasional mention of a Caesar, even though the Old Testament is filled with political intrigue. Nietzsche's point is emphatic: "[Jesus] doesn't know anything about culture, even in passing, he does not need to struggle against it—he does not negate it. . . . The same is true about the state, about the whole civic order and society, about work, about

war—he never had any reason to negate 'the world', the ecclesiastical concept of 'world' never occurred to him . . ." (A 30). Unable to revolt and ignorant of the wider global political situation, Jesus was nevertheless still a great danger. While his '*Verhalten*' would have been no threat to the power of Rome at all—it certainly would have been a threat to that of the Jewish Sanhedrin.

> This rebellion that Jesus has been understood or misunderstood to have caused—I cannot imagine what it was direct against if not the Jewish church. . . . It was a rebellion against the "good and the just," against the "saints of Israel," against the social hierarchy—not against its corruption, but rather against caste, privilege, order, formula; it was a refusal to believe in "higher men," a no said to everything priestly or theologian-like. (A 27)

Jesus's way of life represented the greatest threat to the established order of ressentiment, and to the entire Jewish revaluation of values that instilled into millions the conviction that they are, from their birth, blameworthy for their sins and destined for damnation should they fail to live in the manner which they alone were prescribed. Jesus never preached anarchy, but lived without needing to rule or be ruled. Jesus's life was free of anything "belligerent, no-saying, no-doing" (A 40). His freedom from morality, economics, legal institutions, 'higher men': that was the subversion. He never had to wage war to overcome, just stand upright as an individual. He felt superior to "every feeling of ressentiment" (A 40), and, not unlike Socrates, freely gave his life to those who hated him rather than resist. Jesus's contemporary Jews were not nearly so high-minded. "Revenge resurfaced, the most unevangelical feeling of all" (A 40). Out of the one they had judged, they paradoxically made the eternal judge. With Jewish cunning, Nietzsche surmises, the example found so threatening to their way of life was ironically turned against an enemy Jesus never would have thought to challenge: the Romans. They turned a phenomenon they could not grasp on its own terms into a familiar type (A 31). Thus was a Messiah almost immediately conceived in order to be the avenger who would punish the more powerful nonbelievers and give the true-believers their eternal reward. "Only at this point did people take all the contempt and bitterness against the Pharisees and theologians and put it into the master's type—and in doing so, make him [namely, Jesus] into a Pharisee and theologian!" (A 40). The Jews made a revolutionary out of Jesus for the sake of their revenge (A 40), seeing in his message of love the weapon to sow blame, enmity, and the fear of judgment of their God (A 28). "The fact that humanity knelt down before the opposite of the origin, the meaning, the right of the evangel, the fact that in the concept

of 'church', humanity canonized the very thing the 'bearer of glad tidings' felt to be beneath him, behind him—you will not find a greater example of world-historical irony" (A 36).

So much for what Jesus was not. Once all the doctrines have been removed, once all allusions to an afterlife have been omitted, once the romanticism of the hero, and revolutionary ressentiment has been purged of the depiction of Jesus, we finally reach the positive aspect of Nietzsche's characterization of the 'historical Jesus'. The first positive characteristic (5), hinted at above, is 'idiocy' (A 29).[15] This does not involve an intellectual failing so much as paralyzing hypersensitivity in the face of aversion. "The consequence of an extreme over-sensitivity and capacity for suffering that does not want to be 'touched' at all because it feels every contact too acutely" (A 30). This hypersensitivity, Nietzsche thinks, would have precluded the kinds of heroism Renan ascribes and revolutionary tendencies interpolated by later writers. Every feeling of rebellion would have been perceived as intolerable pain. Happiness would have followed only "when it stops resisting everyone and anything" (A 30). By illustration, Jesus's overturning the money tables would have been the sort of tantrum at the first sensation of irritation we see in emotionally underdeveloped children, not some heroic rebellion against Jewish monetary policy. 'Giving unto Caesar' would have been an act of appeasing the powerful, not some condescension toward earthly success. Jesus's 'turning the other cheek' would express his inability to resist or struggle against those that would hurt him, not magnanimity. "The fear of pain, even of infinitesimal amounts of pain—this could end up only as a religion of love . . ." (A 30).

The second positive attribution involves Jesus being the 'symbolist of internal truths' (6). "If I understand anything about this great symbolist [diesem grossen Symbolisten], it is that he accepted only inner realities as realities, as 'truths'—that he considered everything else, everything natural, temporal, spatial, historical to be just a sign [*Zeichen*], an excuse for similies [*Gleichnisssen*]" (A 34).[16] While Nietzsche denies many of the parables ascribed to Jesus on the grounds of psychological incongruity, he claims that many of the transcendent-sounding phrases he used—'Son of God,' 'Kingdom of Heaven,' 'immaculate conception,' and so on—were really spoken symbolically rather than as an allusion to some supranatural referent. This returns us to the earlier deconstruction of Jesus's alleged doctrines. Earlier, it was shown that Jesus would not have needed doctrines for the meaningful affect he inculcated through his followers. Here, Nietzsche makes a stronger claim, namely, that Jesus could not have uttered doctrines. The reason is that his mode of linguistic

expression was limited to the realm of the symbolic. This linguistic mode, Nietzsche thinks, follows from the psychological type of 'idiot' described above. As hyperbolically nonconfrontational, Jesus expressed only what was inside him in a language all his own, without the plain, direct reference that most people use to communicate. That is to say, Jesus was so introverted that his words were not intended even to have an external reference, were never intended to convince anyone of anything about that world. "[T]he experience of 'life' as only he knew it, repelled every type of word, formula, law, faith, or dogma. He spoke only about what was inside him most deeply: 'life' or 'truth' or 'light' are his words for the innermost, he saw everything else, the whole of reality, the whole of nature, language itself, as having value only as a sign, a parable" (A 32).

The most important symbols that have been systematically misunderstood, according to Nietzsche, are the notions of 'Son' and 'Father.' "[T]he word 'son' expresses the entrance into a feeling of the total transfiguration of all things (blessedness), and the word 'father' expresses this feeling itself, the feeling of eternity, of perfection" (A 34). Similarly, "The 'kingdom of heaven' is a state of heart—not something lying 'above the earth' or coming 'after death'" (A 34). Jesus was misunderstood here to be speaking about some supernatural realm imbued with supernatural entities, when really the words were merely symbolic expressions of his own feelings about different states of happiness.

If these negative deconstructions and positive attributions are the totality of Nietzsche's 'historical Jesus,' then the question arises as to its validity. It is true that Nietzsche's criticism of early testimony is consistent with the general trend of later-nineteenth-century historical theology. With meticulous text criticism, D. F. Strauss was able to show that the Gospel stories are riddled with inconsistencies. Several others in Nietzsche's day came to refine the thesis as to which aspects of the Gospels could and could not be trusted. Wilhelm Wundt, no stranger to psychological interpretation, thinks the only historically demonstrable bits of Jesus's life are the "sayings and discourses."[17] Johannes Weiss would reject Wundt on the grounds of social-historiography, claiming, "By means of the sayings we do not at once reach Jesus, but the community. [. . .] [W]e learn from the source what seemed to the community the characteristic, distinctive, and indispensable thing in Jesus."[18] Half a century of further research allowed Arthur Drews to characterize those inconsistencies as a summary falsification.[19] Locations are wrong and many names confused. Jesus's hometown may have been confused with a Jewish sect east of the Jordan River: the Nazoraeans. Specific dates are rarely given, and when they are,

they are almost always incorrect. Even Luke, who self-references as a learned man, misdates King Herod by at least four years, misdates the governorship of Cyrenius by seven years, and the tetrarchy of Lysanias by at least thirty-four. Luke asserts a relationship between Herod and Pilate, which would have been scarcely possible. No one even seems sure who the emperor at the time was: Augustus or Tiberius? And even Jesus's own name may have been a confusion from Joshua or else taken from the pre-Christian sect known as the Jesseans. Like Nietzsche, Drews believes Jesus's alleged 'doctrines' have all-too-convenient precursors in earlier Jewish literature. Isaiah, Wisdom, and Psalms clearly influenced the depiction in obvious ways: Jesus takes on clear echoes of Isaiah's 'servant,' Wisdom's 'just man,' and Psalm 22's 'sufferer.'[20] Isaiah is most likely the source for most of the Messianic material. Jesus's preferential treatment for the poor and sick has strong resonance throughout the Old Testament, and many phrasings in the Gospels appeared cribbed from earlier Talmudic sources. Even the Sermon on the Mount has clear rhetorical precedents in the Psalms (e.g., Psalm 66, 13 and Psalm 37, 11).[21]

This negative side of Nietzsche's account of Jesus (1–4) was therefore sufficiently central to the contemporary historical paradigm to merit academic consideration. And this variety of what may be called the 'mythicist' interpretation of Jesus—that Jesus was a real person, though the words and deeds attributed to him are a matter of legend—remains a significant interpretation today.[22] Admittedly, Nietzsche's interpretation was partly derived from Strauss and Renan, almost immediately overshadowed by Schweitzer and Drews, and, in comparison to these other 'questers,' poorly defended from a historical standpoint. It is also viciously circular. For one example: Jesus could not have been a metaphysician because all of his metaphysical claims were just symbols; and he must have been a symbolist because he never would have intended a metaphysics. For another: because Jesus was pathologically averse to pain, he could never have resisted authority; and the evidence that he was pathologically averse to pain is his never having resisted authority. Too often in *The Antichrist*, intuition and rhetoric subvert evidence and argument. But admitting these flaws, Nietzsche's negative conclusion was at least consistent with the dominant scholarly interpretation.

The attributive side—that Jesus only spoke in symbols and was hypersensitive to pain—is far more original, but totally speculative. Worse, it must remain mere speculation because of Nietzsche's own arguments. That is, if Nietzsche contends that the texts about Jesus were maliciously corrupted, then no amount

of reinterpretation of those same texts will bring us to a 'truer' picture of what kind of person Jesus was—any more than a meticulous interrogation of a fraudulent map will eventually yield the right path. Moreover, the thought of disciples following around a hypochondriacal hyper-introvert as he muttered cryptic symbols about his own feelings genuinely stretches credulity. If Nietzsche's project is conventional historiography—where value is measured by accuracy, exhaustiveness, evidence, and so on—then this positive side of *The Antichrist* is a total failure. If, however, he is aiming at something else, then the value of his account may come to look rather different.

2 From Jesus to Christ

Apart from deciphering the character of the historical Jesus, the second most prominent feature of the 'historical quest' is the reconstruction of New Testament historiography.[23] Nietzsche stands in their keeping here, too, in both positing a three-stage development of textual corruption and in doubting large swathes of especially the Gospels and the authorship of St. Paul. As with his portrait of Jesus, there is also an attributive psycholgical thesis about "why" the texts were corrupted. And again, this attributive side remains original but wholly speculative.

The first stage of the textual shift is signaled by different and indeed antithetical messages between Jesus the man and the so-called First Congregation, something which can only be seen if we read the Gospels themselves as instantiated records of a slightly earlier tradition. "The Gospels are invaluable testimony to the already inescapable corruption within the First Congegration. [. . .] they are the opposite of naive corruption, they are refinement par excellence, they are psychological corruption raised to art. [. . .] We are among Jews: the first thing to note, so as not to lose the thread completely" (A 44).

As we saw, the meaning of the historical Jesus of Nazareth was essentially that of the symbol-making hypersensitive naturalist who encouraged his followers to see the value-creating power within themselves in opposition to the Jewish political structures that would impose values externally. Jesus's immediate followers, the First Congregation, would have hardly been indifferent to their Jewish culture and so began to frame his role as the fulfillment of the prophecies with which they were intimately familiar. "The prophet, the Messiah, the future judge, the teacher of morality, the miracle worker, John the Baptist—all so

many opportunities for mistaking the type. . ." (A 31). Even before the Gospels were formally composed the legend begins to grow. Thus grew the rumor that Jesus appeared with Elijah and Moses; thus are numerological symbols assigned to otherwise mundane actions; thus do his deeds begin to echo Old Testament heroes. Jesus's message of innocence is made into what Nietzsche thinks is the quintessential Jewish characteristic: the desire for revenge. "Do not be fooled: they say, 'judge not!' but then send to hell everything that gets in their way. By letting God be the judge, they themselves are the judge: by exalting God, they exalt themselves [. . .]" (A 44). Section 45 of *The Antichrist* offers a list of passages that, due to their vengeful message, must have been the work of the First Congregation rather than the words of Jesus himself. "'And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea' (Mk 9:42)—How evangelical!" And again, "'But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses' (Mt. 6:15)—Very compromising for the above-mentioned 'Father' . . . " (A 45). The threat that God will wreak vengeance upon those who believe or act wrongly is as contrary to the message of the historical Jesus as it is consistent with the ressentiment of Jews.

Nietzsche's second stage begins when a self-identifying Christian sect began to gain popularity between the First Congregation and the formal publication of the Gospels. These Christians assumed the early elements of the Jewish Christ myth and adopted the pre-Jesus Jewish devaluation of nature. "Christianity grew up on this sort of false soil, where every nature, every natural value, every reality ran counter to the deepest instincts of the ruling class; accordingly, Christianity assumed the form of a deadly hostility to reality, a hostility unsurpassed to this day" (A 27). In these respects at least, early Christianity and first-century Judaism walked in lockstep. "Christianity can only be understood on the soil where it grew—it is not a countermovement to the Jewish instinct, it is its natural consequence, a further conclusion drawn by its terrifying logic" (A 26). The 'further conclusion' further disfigured Jesus, transforming him from the political weapon of the Jews against Rome into the metaphysical salvation of humanity from sin. "The second proposition is: the psychological type of the Galilean is still recognizable, but it had to assume a completely degenerate form [. . .] before it came to be used as a redeemer of humanity" (A 26). To 'redeem' humanity, in Nietzsche's derogation, meant to denigrate whatever flourished naturally—earthly power—in dereference to some made-up divine power. Thus did these early Christians, alongside the Jews, come to revile the Romans. But

in another ironic twist, their ressentiment turned its attention to the other earthly authority: the Jewish aristocracy. The Gospels thus took up the very same weapon against Judaism that it learned from Judaism: the 'chosen people' were now viewed as the executioners of the one true Messiah. "[A]s soon as the gap between Jew and Judaeo-Christian appeared, the latter had no choice except to use the same methods of self-preservation dictated by the Jewish instinct against the Jews themselves . . . " (A 44).

The account of the development thus far is not so far-fetched. Although Nietzsche doesn't name them, there were several Second-Temple sects in the area whose precepts could have easily bled into the picture of 'Jesus of Nazareth': the Jesseans and Nazoreans, for example. Even mainline Jews of the time would have been well versed in Isaiah, Wisdom, Psalms, and other Messianic texts that portray a second-coming justice-wielding conquerer. And they were not, as proven by the Baptist, unaccustomed to shoe-horning contemporary figures into these frameworks. The interpolation of a socialist ressentiment would have been derived especially from Isaiah, which also turns neighbor love into a curse upon the powerful. "He will even judge you rulers and leaders of his own nation. You destroyed his vineyard and filled your houses by robbing the poor" (Isa. 3:14). Indeed, even the Book of Revelation betrays its author's clear dependence upon the Messianic tradition, along with a fair admixture of astral numerology.[24] Therefore, that the image of Jesus came to take on earlier Jewish traits is highly probable—the question is when. For Albert Schweitzer, Jesus himself would have been sufficiently familiar with these sources to incoprorate them into his ministry, therein styling himself as a Messianic savior.[25] Contrary to Schweitzer, and in agreement with William Wrede, Nietzsche thinks it must have been an invention of the First Congregation and early Christian writers who first applied the Messianic language, not Jesus himself.[26] Contrary to Wrede, however, for Nietzsche the alteration of meaning was not a set of innocent mistakes, but a conscious and systematic hijacking intended to gain power over their rivals.

So, the 'idiot' symbolist was transformed by the First Congregation and then the Gospel writers into a Messianic God-Savior. But the damage was not done. Nietzsche's attention now turns to Paul as the most transformative architect of the Christ myth.[27] "Not reality, not the historical truth! . . . And once again, the Jew's priestly instinct perpetrated the same enormous crime against history—he simply crossed out Christianity's yesterday, its day before yesterday, he invented for himself a history of the first Christianity" (A 42). Paul's writings focus on the resurrection of Jesus and eschew any sort of narrative account

of the life of Jesus. Paul does this, per Nietzsche, because he wants to deify everything originally human about Jesus and transcendentalize his naturalistic values. He substitutes a supranatural theology for the wandering moralist, and consequently supranatural requirements for lawful and moral obedience. Deeds on earth mean nothing in comparison to faith in the resurrection.[28] Thus was Paul not only divergent from Jesus, but in fact the antithesis of Nietzsche's portrayed Jesus. "The type of the redeemer, the doctrine, the practice, the death, the meaning of his death, even the aftermath of his death—nothing was left untouched, nothing was left bearing any resemblance to reality. Paul simply shifted the emphasis of this whole being, putting it behind this being—into the lie of Jesus' 'resurrection.' Basically, he had no use whatsoever for the life of the redeemer—he needed the death on the cross and something else besides" (A 42).

What motivated Paul to turn Jesus into the enemy, not simply of Judea or Rome, but of the natural world itself? Nietzsche writes, "The 'God' that Paul invented for himself, a God who 'confounds all worldly wisdom' [. . .] is in truth just Paul's firm decision to do it himself: to call his own will 'God', Torah—that is Jewish to the core. Paul wants to confound all 'wisdom' of the world" (A 47). In this twisting passage, Nietzsche identifies three motivations. First, Paul rejected Jesus's message of innocence in order to double-down on the Jewish notion of inherent guilt. The same Jesus who encouraged his followers to "offer the other cheek," the same quiet lamb who allowed himself to be killed, is transformed into a "sacrifice" who now sits in final judgment of those who fail to properly obey the divine commands. This is a manifestation of Paul's will, Nietzsche tells us, which in its apotheosis expresses the quintessentially Jewish ressentiment against the mighty on earth. Second, Paul rejected Jesus's emphasis on earthly well-being in order to make the value of all agency relative to a supra-earthly ideal. The life of Jesus is only the precondition for the far more important event: his resurrection, which of itself proves that all genuine value lay only in the metaphysical realm. "And in one fell swoop, the evangel becomes the most contemptible of all unfulfillable promises, the outrageous doctrine of personal immortality. . . . Paul himself still taught it as a reward!. . . " (A 41).

Related to this is the third of Paul's motivations. By placing all value in a beyond, he undercuts the value of any earthly success, indeed to the point where earthly success is regarded as evil. Doing so inculcates two intertwined dangers. Nihilism, on the one hand, follows from the presumption that there is no point in striving in this earthly life: "What is the point of public spirit, of being grateful

for your lineage or for your ancestors, what is the point of working together, of confidence, of working towards any sort of common goal or even keeping one in mind?" (A 43). Egalitarian socialism, on the other hand—and all the problems Nietzsche believes stem from it—follows from believing everyone is equal in the only way that really matters: in the eyes of God. "[E]veryone is on the same level as everyone else, that in the commonality of all beings, the 'salvation' of each individual lays claim to an eternal significance . . . " (A 43). Paul invited both consequences with his hatred of earthly success and happiness, and so invented a divine redeemer to guarantee their millennia-long endurance.

Seemingly all characters in Nietzsche's histories act out of power: either the direct and natural power of the 'masters' or the tortuously subversive spiritual power of the "priests." It is clear on which side Paul stands. "What he needed was power; with Paul, the priests wanted to return to power—he could only use ideas, doctrines, symbols that would tyrannize the masses and form the herds" (A 42). Just as with the priestly revaluation of values in GM, Paul resents earthly power, subverts others' earthly power by means of appeal to spiritual power, and does so in order to gain his own earthly power. And Paul, by and large, got what he wanted. The ground of the empire was dry enough that such a match like Paul's Messiah began a wildfire. Soon all the lower-classes and disenfranchised among the wider empire began to see in Paul's ressentiment the possibility of expressing their own. The wider the seeds were flung, the more savage it became (A 22). And so Europe was gradually Christianized as the expression of priestly power. "The 'law,' the 'will of God,' the 'holy book,' 'inspiration'—All these are just words for the conditions under which priests come to power and maintain power" (A 55).

As was the case with the first two stages of falsification, Nietzsche's third is a central motif of the contemporary "questers."[29] That Paul reframed and even altered what may have been the historical Jesus is today doubted by few. William Wrede claimed in 1904, "[h]e of whom Paul professed himself the disciple and servant was not the historical human being Jesus."[30] Wrede goes on to confirm Nietzsche's claim that the biggest difference between Paul and the previous developments involved Paul's disavowal of Jesus's naturally lived existence. "One single event was important to [Paul]: the end of life, the death [of Jesus]. For him, however, even this is not the moral action of a man; indeed it is not an historical fact at all for him, but a supra-historical fact, an event of the supersensible world."[31] Arthur Drews goes further to argue that Paul had no knowledge of Jesus whatsoever, but used the name Jesus as merely

the incarnation of his metaphysical ideals.[32] "But that he never appeals to any distinctive acts of 'the Lord,' that he never quotes the sayings of Jesus in the Gospels as such, and never applies them, even where the words and conduct of Jesus would be most useful for strengthening his own views and deductions . . . all this is for us a certain proof that Paul knew nothing of Jesus."[33]

If Nietzsche is consistent with the 'Questers' that Paul was largely responsible for turning the historical Jesus into Christ, then he certainly is not with respect to why. Nietzsche's attribution of Paul's motivations is—absent any evidence external to the texts themselves—entirely speculative. It relies upon a wildly exaggerated psychologism. And it is in no small measure racist: Paul, as a typical Jew, would necessarily have been consumed by ressentiment. More sober historians, and even Drews to some degree, resist psychologizing Paul precisely because there is so little evidence about Paul outside his own writings. Worse, Nietzsche fails to distinguish between the seven canonical Pauline and six likely pseudo-epigraphic epistles. This is detrimental to Nietzsche's thesis about Paul insofar as, first, relying on the texts of other authors forces Nietzsche to have to expand his psychological analysis beyond a single author into a number of otherwise unknown authors; and, second, if the epigraphic letters are consistent in message it evidences against Nietzsche's depiction of Paul as a singular radical. Further, it is easy to explain the different foci in Paul and the Gospel writers without resorting to psychologism. If the Epistles and Acts fail to accurately depict the life of Jesus, then it may have been that Paul wanted to cover what the Gospels do not, lest they be redundant. (Nietzsche doesn't seem to know that Paul most likely wrote before the Gospels.) A believer might well claim that the Epistles articulate only truths revealed to St. Paul—and thus should not be expected to know the mundane details of Jesus's life. Whatever the case, the transformation Nietzsche rightly demarcates in the tradition in no way requires the sort of villanous charalatan he uses to explain it.

3 *The Antichrist* as history

There is a pattern in the strategies Nietzsche uses for A's two main theses. Just as with his critical deconstructions and speculative attributions to the character of the historical Jesus in the first section of this chapter, so in the previous section did Nietzsche treat the textual tradition in both a deconstructive (that the text we have received must have been altered in three phases) and a

positive or attributive way (why the First Congregation, early Christians, and Paul would have been motivated to do so). And here, too, the negative thesis is consistent with the 'historical quest,' while the positive attribution is wildly divergent from it. This brings us to the question of Nietzsche's historical form.

Were one to make the barest comparison between the methods of 'Historical Questers' and Nietzsche, one would be presented a mountain of textual and archaeological evidence, critico-linguistic analysis in the original Hebrew and Greek, and the rest of the historian's tools on one side, and spewed vitriol intermingled with groundless speculation on the other.[34] Even if his negative conclusions are consistent with it, Nietzsche's methods could not be farther from conventional historiography. Granted, a 'curse,' which is what Nietzsche tells us his *Antichrist* is, should not be held to the same professional standards as a piece of academic historiography. And Nietzsche admits the non-scholarly nature of his project often enough. In contrast to the methods of D. F. Strauss, for example, he writes, ". . . to apply scientific method to [the lives of saints] in the absence of any other records seems to me like a project that is doomed from the start—just scholars wasting time. . ." (A 28).

But the efficacy of his curse does seem to depend significantly upon a meaningful historical account—why else turn to Christianity's past at all in decrying its contemporary effects? Furthermore, a portion of his criticism of contemporary Judeo-Christian culture is that they failed to understand their own past properly. "Our age is proud of its historical sense: so how could it convince itself of this piece of nonsense [. . .]? To the contrary: the history of Christianity—starting, in fact, with the death on the cross—is the story of the progressively cruder misunderstanding of an original symbolism" (A 37). Presumably his *Antichrist* is meant to redress that historical nonsense. Nietzsche even claims to present the historical past correctly. "I will come back, I will tell the true history of Christianity" (A 39).

Nietzsche therefore seems to claim some historical standing for his attributive portrait of the historical Jesus, but nowhere claims to be doing—or even to respect—the kinds of 'scientific' historiography that all other 'historical questers' presume to be history as such. A principle of charity would suggest that there is some other road Nietzsche sees himself as walking. The latter chapters of *Der Antichrist* suggest where that road lies.

Nietzsche's historiographical method draws a distinction between true demonstration and conviction-force, and holds that the latter rarely depends upon the former.[35] Why human beings are convinced of a historical account has more to do with satisfying power aims than with demonstrating their

interpretations correspond to reality. "Christianity knows that it is a matter of complete indifference whether or not something is true, but it is of supreme importance that people have faith in its truth" (A 23). The 'historical questers" complaint that early Christian chronicles of Jesus are 'untrue' is thus quite far removed from Nietzsche's meta-historical requirement of convincing accounts. Even if their claims cannot be adjudicated by the light of conventional historiography, it is inarguable that the First Congregation, the early Christians, and Paul successfully satisfied the power aims of huge swathes of human beings over the past two thousand years.

The problem Nietzsche sees instead is that Christian history is a 'lie,' though in a peculiar sense.

> Every conviction has its history, its pre-formations, its ventures and its mistakes: it becomes a conviction after not being one for a long time, after barely being one for even longer. What? Could lies be among these embryonic forms of convictions too? Sometimes all you need is a change of characters: what were lies for the father are convictions for the son. I call lies not wanting to see what you see, not wanting to see it the way you do. . . (A 55)

Nietzsche actually has two implicit definitions of 'lie' in this passage: a misrepresentation of reality and the delusion of not wanting to see what in fact one does see. The priestly interpretation of Jesus's life isn't a 'lie' in the first sense of an intentional disjunction between their account and a past reality as it really was. "[P]riests do not lie—there simply is no room for lying about 'truth' or 'untruth' in the sorts of issues priests talk about" (A 55). That is, since the absolute, correspondential-realist 'truth' of Jesus's life is something beyond the human ability to discern, one cannot intentionally misrepresent it: "[Y]ou cannot lie unless you can decide what is true. And this is impossible for human beings to do. . ." (A 55).

But while the priests cannot lie in that first sense, they most certainly do lie in the second. This second type of "lie" is an interpretation that stands antagonistically to the "way one sees," namely, one's perspective. The lies of Christianity are its proclamation of a single otherworldly God, a lowly carpenter raised to the status of God, a God killed and resurrected, a man whose death allegedly conquers death, a man who preached life turned against natural life. The persecuted deluded themselves into creating an almighty from out of the weakest. With their own distinct personal values, they demanded a universal set of values, a single set of truths held over the most multifarious swathes of perspectives that would come to constitute Christian Europe. "'The truth

is there': wherever you hear this, it means that the priest is lying . . . " (A 55). The historical tradition of Jesus as Christ is a lie not because it fails to adequate reality, but because it amounts to 'not wanting to see the way you see': a subjective desire for nonsubjective values and an attempt to conquer in the name of weak, an attempt to flee reality for metaphysical realm. Christian historiography was a lie to itself, a self-delusion. The First Congregation is guilty of this lie, as are the early Christians, as is Paul especially.

If Christian historiography is ultimately problematic for its self-delusion rather than its lack of correspondential truth, it seems Nietzsche must by contrast locate the viability of his own account in its intrinsic probity. And he does suggest this: "—In the end, it comes down to the purpose the lie is supposed to serve. The fact that 'holy' purposes are lacking in Christianity is my objection to its means" (A 56). He repeats this at the start of Section 58: "In fact, it makes a difference why you are lying: whether you are lying in order to sustain or to destroy." Nietzsche's attributive revaluation of Jesus, as an interpretation that imprints upon a real past his own will rather an attempt at conventional correspondential realism, is at least in this structural way not all that different from Paul's and the other historiographers' lie. But he claims here that his purpose in lying is nobler. And there appear two ways in which Nietzsche believes that to be so.

First, Nietzsche's history of Jesus is not, as it was for the 'Questers,' merely an attempt to 'destroy' the tradition of values that derive from the historically rendered Christ. His negative strategy was meant to deconstruct the historical tradition of interpretation of Jesus. But that was not where Nietzsche stopped. His attributive attempts to construct a 'new' Jesus—an Antichrist—as a simple human being with sagacious advice for living well, avoiding ressentiment, speaking symbolically from inner convictions, disregarding moral authority, are themselves instantiations of new values, what Nietzsche considers life-engendering values. That image of Christ is not coincidentally the kind of reader he seeks as well: "Respect for yourself; love for yourself; an unconditional freedom over yourself . . . well then! These are my only readers, my true readers, my predestined readers: and who cares about the rest of them? The rest are just humanity" (A P). So while Nietzsche's fails to correspond to some absolute reality, his purpose in lying is nobler than Paul and the 'historical questers' for its affirmation of natural life.

The second way Nietzsche's account avoids the self-deluded lie, presaged above, is that his interpretation is not meant to be the single, absolute account of

Jesus or the historiographical tradition. In fact, he begins his book by delimiting the scope of his audience to precisely those who even have a prospect of being convinced. "This book belongs to the very few. Perhaps none of them are even alive yet. Maybe they are the ones who will understand my Zarathustra. There are ears to hear some people—but how could I ever think there are ears to hear me?" (A P). Paul's attempt to force the universal valuation of his own values with a divine guarantee echoes nearly two thousand years later in the attempt by the 'historical questers' to force the universal valuation of their interpretations with a scientific guarantee: a drive for universal objective values paradoxically free of one's of own drives. And with the death of God, Nietzsche thinks, must follow the death of a belief in a single set of values, a single set of truths, a single historical interpretation that everyone must hold. His account is more honest in its admission of its perspectival fundament, its status as a 'curse' and not some absolute truth allegedly detached from his perspective. The historical quest, in the end, denied the sanctity of Christ but maintained the sanctity of historical truth and the self-delusion of objectivity. Nietzsche's interpretation—if not 'truer' in a superficial sense—is more honest in admitting its status as interpretation intent on convincing only selective perspectives.

Notes

1 Bruno Bauer ironically agreed with Strauss's main thesis, while nevertheless waging a decades-long diatribe against Strauss's credentials as a Hegelian, going so far as to enlist a young Nietzsche as his de-facto lieutenant.
2 Dawes (2001), 77f.
3 Wilke (1838).
4 For an Anglophone popularization, see Streeter (1924).
5 Most scholarship on the question divides the Quest into three periods: the Old Quest (1778–1909), the Interim Period (1909–53), and the New Quest (1953–). Since this chapter is chiefly about Nietzsche's framework, it will focus on the context of only the Old Quest.
6 Drews (1912), 307. Rhetorically more restrained versions of Drews's position can be found in the works of Albert Kalthoff, William Benjamin Smith, J. M. Robertson, and Thomas Whittaker.
7 For the history of Elizabeth's publication of *Der Antichrist*, see Schaberg (1995), 179.
8 A comprehensive reckoning of the sources of *The Antichrist* is Sommer (2000). Another fine recent analysis is Detering (2010).

9 There are important intersections between Drews and Nietzsche. Like Nietzsche, Drews was influenced by Bauer's criticism of both Christian fundamentalists and David Friedrich Strauss. Like at least the young Nietzsche, Drews was a strong proponent of both Schopenhauer and Wagner, even contributing a significant monograph on the latter. See Drews (1898). But for whatever loose similarities, Drews became one of Nietzsche's most strident early critics. His motivation was in large part a defense of his teacher, Nietzsche's own enemy, Eduard von Hartmann. See Drews (1906). Drews remained, well into the Nazi period, an avowed Hartmannian, even trying to entwine a non-Christian religion of pantheistic unconscious or "World Spirit" with the Völkish movement as a quintessentially German religion. See Drews (1935). It was the combination of his antipathy toward Hartmann, his eventual rejection of Wagner's nationalism, and his commitment to the individual over the masses that made Nietzsche the target of Drews's vitriol in several books and papers. See Drews (1904, 1919, 1922, 1931). One of the most striking critiques Drews levels is in fact against the Nazis for their favoring Nietzsche over Hartmann. For Drews, Nietzsche's commitment to individualism meant he wasn't Nazi enough! See Drews (1934).

10 The position has returned at least somewhat to the vogue with Price (2000).

11 Whether Jesus could be considered a moral philosopher of sorts was decisively rejected by Schneider (1910), 478ff. Decades before, Strauss's argument was slightly different: if Jesus was in fact a moral philosopher, his philosophy would have been insufficiently original or valuable to have been worth much his fame. See Strauss (1875), 48–60.

12 For a reading of Jesus as a sort of Cynic sage, see Funk (1996), 166ff.

13 Nietzsche read *Vie de Jesu* (1863) first in 1877 and again in preparation for the several works of 1888.

14 Intentionally or otherwise, Nietzsche fails to mention several of Renan's key theses. Among them, that the *Gospels*' accounts of miracles and supranatural happenings were malicious interpolations by later editors, that Jesus would have greater integrity as a man than as a claimant divinity, and finally, that Jesus intentionally purged any Jewish influences from his teaching in order to rise above the petty spirit of revenge—all of these, of course, are strikingly Nietzschean.

15 Nietzsche associates his usage with Dostoyevsky's eponymous novel. For an insightful discussion of Nietzsche's relation to the Russian novelist, see Stellino (2015).

16 A substantial problem with Nietzsche's argument is that he already provided reasons for not trusting the recorded sayings of Jesus. If he is right, then he cannot assert that Jesus's actual way of speaking would have been akin to the form the *Gospels* record. Drews (1912), 287f is more consistent insofar as he remains agnostic as to Jesus's way of speaking due to the unreliability of the *Gospels*.

17 Wundt (1904), II/3, 528. See also Schneider (1910), 465.

18 Weiss (1909), 159.
19 Drews (1912), 217ff.
20 Drews (1912), 169–79 lays out the case convincingly for the influence of these three texts.
21 These and a wealth of others can be found in Schreiber (1877).
22 For a summary evaluation of contemporary instantiations, see Ehrman (2012).
23 On Nietzsche's relation to Paul see Havemann (2002) and Azzam (2015). The latter especially has a commendable interpretation of their respective attempts to construct myths.
24 Drews (1912), 223–30 claims it was written without either knowledge or even concern for the historical Jesus. Isaiah is the much more important figure for Christianity, as he was the most important source on whom both the *Gospels* and Paul drew.
25 Schweitzer (1925), 61–80.
26 See generally Wrede (1901).
27 Although Nietzsche's depiction is highly original, there are at least some similarities with a text he borrowed from Overbeck, namely, Lüdemann (1872).
28 The so-called 'New Perspective on Paul' movement of recent years attempts to stress Paul's emphasis on worldly deeds, contrary to Nietzsche's interpretation here. Nevertheless, Nietzsche's depiction of Pauline theology as requiring faith in the divine Christ as sufficient for salvation was consistent with the reigning thesis of his time.
29 Theologians, though few historians, would continue to maintain the comprehensive accuracy of Paul about the *life* of an historical Jesus, though without much critical evidence. Weinel (1904), 16f would even assert that Paul was quoting Jesus directly. See also Feine (1902).
30 Wrede (1904), 85.
31 Ibid.
32 Drews (1912), 102.
33 Drews (1912), 100. Drews would further claim that the Epistles themselves were not written by Paul, on the grounds that their writer appears far more Greek than Jewish. Ibid., 117f.
34 This difference would lead Andreas Urs Sommer to call the entire *Antichrist* a 'satyrisches Maskenspiel,' Sommer (2000), 65.
35 See Jensen (2013), Ch. 5.

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7

Nietzsche and the Critique of Religion

Tracy B. Strong

> *Born of the mysteries of dawn, they ponder on how, between the tenth and the twelfth stroke of the clock, the day could present a face so pure, so radiant, so joyfully transfigured—they seek the philosophy of the morning.*
>
> HH 638/KGW IV-2/374[1]

On the title page of the draft of *Der Antichrist*, Nietzsche had given "*Umwerthung aller Werte*" as his subtitle. He crossed that out and replaced it with "*Fluch auf das Christenthum*"—Curse on Christianity. Indeed, it appears that he was debating issues of priority in his mind. The planned original title page had as subtitle "*Versuch einer Kritik des Christenthums/Erstes Buch/der Umwerthung aller Werte*"—"Essay on a Critique of Christianity/First Book/The Revaluation of all Values." His original plans saw *The Antichrist* as the first book in a four-volume work to be entitled the "Revaluation of All Values." After the critique of the religion, he planned to proceed to a "critique of philosophy as a nihilistic movement," then to a critique of "the disastrous species of ignorance—morality." The last book was to be the "philosophy of the eternal return" and would be called "Dionysos" (KGW VIII-3, 347; see also 397).

The last three were never written, but why the change to the designation of the first book? The most likely explanation is that he realized that it would not be possible to undertake the *Umwerthung aller Werte* until there had been set forth a *Fluch auf das Christenthum*. The curse appears to be a necessary prerequisite for the revaluation. Why might a curse on Christianity be the necessary prerequisite for a revaluation of all values? In this, as is so much else, Nietzsche rejoins Marx. At the beginning of the *Introduction to a Contribution to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Marx wrote that the "criticism of religion was the premise of all higher criticism." Presumably he meant that if

religion were left without critique, it made impossible any critique of the society in which we actually live, thus any understanding of human society. It did so because it posed an impossible requirement for the true knowledge of an other: it required that knowledge of the other be like the knowledge of God. And since we could have no knowledge of God—although God could of us—conclusive knowledge of other human beings and of one's self was rendered impossible. We would, willy-nilly, remain captured by an error-picture.

I might note that neither Nietzsche nor Marx stands alone here. For Freud, practically echoing Marx's designation of religion as the "opium of the people," religion was an "illusion" that served to paper over the distresses inherent in civilization. While Lenin was willing to tolerate religion when it was politically advantageous, his judgment on religion was severe. It was "religion for the people." "Just because any religious idea," he writes to Maxim Gorky, "any idea of god at all, and flirtation even with a god is the most inexpressible foulness . . . [especially when accepted by the bourgeoisie]. . . . For that very reason it is the most dangerous foulness, the most shameful infection . . . . All god-building is the fond self-contemplation of the thick-witted philistine" (Lenin 1980: 122–23).[2] Hannah Arendt found Christianity to be "unpolitical, non-public," indeed, unworldly. Charity, she wrote, was "worldlessness." She saw the Christian emphasis on individual goodness as fundamentally hostile to that which is public (Arendt 1998: 54–55; 74). Indeed, for all the instruction she took from her study of Augustine, the message that comes away from her doctoral dissertation is that the Incarnation releases mankind from the necessity and practice of politics. There was nothing more dangerous (Arendt 1996).[3]

These are not the simple dismissals of nonbelieving self-proclaimed "atheists" such as we find today, who substitute their belief in science for that in God—not actually a real substitution for, as Babette Babich has shown, Nietzsche argued that they amounted to the same in human consequences. Their distress with Christianity derives from a deeper source, a distress at a structure implanted so deeply in the Western self that it shapes the thought of nonbelievers as much as it does that of believers. Think back to this passage in Max Weber:

> For weakness it is to be unable to look the fate of the age full in the face. The destiny of our culture, however, is that we shall once again become more clearly conscious of this situation after a millennium in which our allegedly or supposedly exclusive reliance on the glorious pathos of the Christian ethic had blinded us. (Weber 2004: 24)

For Weber the dangers from Christianity are only a thousand years old—presumably from the time that the development of the Carolingian minuscule made bureaucracy possible. But, how has the "Christian ethic . . . blinded us"? At the very end of GM, Nietzsche writes that humans would "rather will the void than be void of will" (*lieber . . . das Nichts wollen als nicht wollen*). He means by that that even after the death of God the structure of willing characteristic of the Socratico-Christian West will persist. That structure consists in the pursuit of something (truth, a banister) that is destined to fail, precisely because it is pursued. Yet, one never gives up trying. The genius of Christianity was to have established that it was possible to attain truth but only in heaven. Nihilism consists in attempting doing something that cannot be done. I cannot resist noting that Groucho Marx is invoking nihilism when he asserts: "I would not belong to any club that would have me." Stanley Cavell says, "The reason consequences furiously hunt us down is not merely that we are half blind, and unfortunate, but that we go on doing the thing that produced these consequences in the first place" (Cavell 1971: 309).[4]

What about Christianity needs critique? Christianity holds out the possibility of redemption. To be redeemed means to be released from the past one has lived and start a new life. To attain redemption requires that one live life in a certain way. The effect of the redemption promise is to make the world calculable: if one does such-and-such, then one will be redeemed.[5] The imperative, then, is that our actions have predictable consequences. And from this comes the need to master the world, to make it conform to our will. When Heidegger, following Nietzsche, says that science is the new religion, he means that they have fundamentally the same aim—to make the world knowable and predictable. Weber and Schmitt's analysis of secularization make the same point.

Thus secularization—a reality in modern times—is not an alternative to religion. It is in the end more of the same. As Nietzsche notes,

> The political illusion, about which I smile as do my contemporaries over the religious illusion of earlier times, is above all secularization, the belief in the world and a beating-out-of ones-senses of the "beyond" and the "afterworld." Their goal is the well-being of fleeting individuals: thus socialism is its fruit. . . . They have no reason to wait as did humans with eternal souls and eternal becoming and future improvements.

Nietzsche opposes his own teaching to this religio-secularized form of being: "Live such that you must wish to so live again. . . . You will do so in any case"

(KGW V-2: 402–403).[6] The theme of eternal return is meant as a counter to the religion/secularization stance.

And with the evolution of Christianity into secularization, the apprentice is unleashed. Playing out the consequences of the secularization development, we are now capable, as Hannah Arendt writes,

> of starting processes of our own . . . . However . . . only under certain circumstances does frailty appear to be the chief characteristic of human affairs. The Greeks measure them [human affairs] against the ever-presence or eternal recurrence of all natural things, and the chief Greek concern was to measure up to and become worthy of an immortality which surrounds men but which mortals do not possess. To people who are not possessed by this concern with immortality, the realm of human affairs is bound to show an altogether different, even somehow contradictory aspect, namely, an extraordinary resiliency whose force of persistence and continuity in time is far superior to the stable durability of the solid world of things. Whereas men have always been capable of destroying whatever was the product of human hands and have become today even of the potential destruction of what man did not make—the earth and earthly nature—men had never been and never will be able to understand or even to control reliably any of the processes they start through action . . . . And this incapacity to undo what has been done is matched by an almost equally complete incapacity to foretell the consequences of any deed or even to have realizable knowledge of its motives. (Arendt 1998: 232–33)

Her thought echoes reflections in Nietzsche to the effect that one knows neither the origins of an action nor any consequences beyond those that are immediate ("Who knows the consequences? Five steps ahead . . ") (KGW VIII-3, 164). Central to what brings home the impact of this is the realization that we have it in our power to destroy the earth itself. If we can destroy the earth, we no longer think ourselves frail. The Greeks had, however, retained a sense of human frailty in that for them human action was measured against the eternality of the natural world. If modern man can destroy the world, we cannot measure ourselves against eternity.

Several points emerge from this consideration. First is that the nature of contemporary human action is to set in march in the world processes, the consequences of which cannot be determined. Second, the modern attitude toward such processes is to seek to render the world of human affairs stable at the expense of the natural world—a reversal of what Arendt takes to have been characteristic of the Greeks.[7] Third, the pursuit of the desire to make the world stable and knowable—the aim of modern science—has introduced the

consequences of human unpredictability into the natural world. Unleashed with this are sets of occurrences in response to which no human action can be taken. Events occur for which there can be neither forgiveness nor punishment. (One has only to think of the actual and coming ecological crises). Arendt continues, "It is therefore quite significant, a structural element in the realm of human affairs, that men are unable to punish what has turned out to be unforgivable." In *The Human Condition*, she refers this to Kant's understanding of "radical evil"—later her experience with Eichmann will lead her to modify this to the idea of the "banality of evil." But importantly such events "transcend the realm of human affairs and the potentialities of human power, both of which they radically destroy wherever they make their appearance. Indeed, . . . the deed itself dispossesses us of all power" (Arendt 1998: 241). Importantly, this development was related by Nietzsche to the death of the political. In 1871, with his attention still turning around the problematic of BT and the problem of cultural revolution, he writes: "From what does the art of the state disappear. From science. And this from what? A turning away from wisdom, a lack of artistry" (KGW III-3, 156).

A critique of the above will first require a critique of religion and for us in the West in particular of Christianity. With this context in mind, let me turn to Christ, the Antichrist, and Christianity. For translators, the title of the book *Der Antichrist* is ambiguous, as the German permits. It refers, on the one hand, to that being whose world-historical role it is to oppose Christ: the Antichrist. It also means "The Antichristian," the person who or that which opposes Christianity. In perhaps a kind of faded memory of their early instruction, some scholars have insisted that the book is really about Christianity and not about Christ, thereby preserving His life from the pollution of institutions. Some of these scholars have, as editors, required that the title in the English version, be given as "The Antichristian." That is, I think, a mistake. Nietzsche is quite conscious of the double meanings and means them both: one of the main themes of his book is the problematic relation between Christ and Christianity. I propose here to look, on the one hand, at what Nietzsche says about Christ and then to relate that to what he says about Christianity. It is not the case, I will argue, that the two are, as some have claimed, quite separate. But it is also not the case that the two are easily related to each other. "Anti" (αντί) in Greek means not only "against" and "opposite of" but also "in place of" and "in comparison to." In 1 and 2 John, "the Antichrist" refers to the person who denies that Christ is the Messiah. In 1 Jn 2:18, it is said that there are already in the world many antichrists (in lower case). Importantly, the Antichristos is never, and for Nietzsche should not be,

identified with Satan—to take the term as such would mean to remain within the logic of Christianity.

I begin with two texts:

> Whatever Is done out of love is done beyond good and evil. (BGE 153 /KGW VI-2, 99)

> Jesus said to his Jews: "The law was for servants—love God as I love him, as his son! What are morals to us sons of God?" (BGE 153 /KGW VI-2, 101)

These two passages are from the central section of BGE, a book that is Nietzsche's most extended investigation of a kind of quasi-transcendental deduction of knowledge. More precisely, it is an investigation of what occurs to a person who makes claims of knowledge. It starts by raising the question of what would be the case if truth were a woman.[8] He notes that philosophers are not expert around women—philosophers make clumsy lovers. One might conclude from this that philosophy has little to do with truth. It is, however, more natural to conclude that philosophers do not know how to love women—or truth. Love is, one might say, a quality that one must manifest in order to raise authentically the question if something be true or false. Insofar as love is a form of cognition—and for Nietzsche it is (see the section of GS entitled "we must learn to love")—the consideration of love here is a consideration of what happens to us when we encounter the world in love, that is, as philo-sophers.

The first question the passages point at is what it would mean to be or go "beyond good and evil," beyond, I take it, the realm in which moral categories apply to one's actions. More bluntly, when one has gone beyond good and evil (Who can do this? How is it done?) where does one find oneself?[9] The second passage raises a question about the difference between love and law—the question notably raised by Saint Paul. Note that it does not here suggest a gulf between Jesus and Paul. It suggests that for Nietzsche the figure of Jesus is a kind of immoralist or amoralist and that He knows something about love that entitles Him to claim that He is liberated from the realm of law and thus perhaps from that of morality, at least from categorical imperatives.

The notion that love stands in a dangerous or perhaps antagonistic relation to morality is not new to Nietzsche. Kant makes a distinction between pathological and practical love and suggests (both in the "Doctrine of Virtue" and the *Critique of Practical Reason*) that will-governed practical love (as opposed to what he calls pathological love) only is consonant with moral behavior.[10] He suggests

that marriage is a valuable institution because it provides a moral framework for a relationship that threatens always to transform one between persons to one between objects.[11]

Yet, Nietzsche is unlikely to share with Kant the same valuation of morality as potentially helpful to love. In understanding this, it is important to remember the intimate link between morality and law. For Kant, we find the moral realm only as a law—that is the only way we can experience morality. This tells him something about the relation of human beings to morality: as we are not perfect beings we must experience the moral realm (which Kant understands as the realm of freedom) as an imperative, that is, as law. Nietzsche shares much of this understanding of morality; but he is less likely to worry about calling into question the status of morality. Kant, on the other hand, must at some level devalue that which cannot be experienced as law, as imperative. In relation of Christ, a question implied by my previous citations is: Is love commensurable with morality as law?

An additional question is raised by the comparison of Nietzsche with Kant, as it would be with most moral philosophers. Typically, moral philosophers have argued that the validity of morality depended on the (potential) universalism of the claim of reason (or utility, or whatever). That is, the principles on which a true morality (as opposed to historically codified social practices) rested must be able to evaluate every relevant human act. (Exceptions were generally made, of course, for the realm of *Naturwissenschaft* as well as for analytical statements). There was, in other words, an unspoken moral imperative that underlay morality itself, an imperative that, as it were, moralized morality. Nietzsche's questions here open the possibility that there may be occasions when we might understand actions to be valued and valuable, which could not, however, be judged morally correct. (Bernard Williams wrote about this and it is one of the reasons for his interest in Nietzsche.) We must thus also determine how and who determines what is and is not moral.

Does Christ do this? Clearly, He does. Thus we must ask about Him—how does He, and who is He, to determine what is moral. Jesus stands for Nietzsche as the example of the man who knows more about love and loves more than has anyone else—he is the human being who has "flown highest yet and gone astray the most beautifully" (BGE 60 / KGW VI-2, 77).[12] Thus the investigation of Nietzsche on love properly goes through an investigation of Nietzsche on Christ.

Nietzsche's relation to Christ, as is his to Socrates, is multiple and complex. Nothing can be more wrong or more misleading than a facile conclusion that he was "against" either of them. (This is not to say that he was not, only that

the conclusion cannot be facile.) As noted, *Der Antichrist* can be held to name Jesus: there is throughout Nietzsche's writing about Christ a distinct note of admiration, not to say sometimes of jealousy.[13] Christ, says Nietzsche, is "the noblest man"; he wanted to "take the notion of punishment and judgment out of the world"; he was "the destroyer of the law."

Nietzsche focuses on Christ's life, not on his teachings. Christ exemplified a "new praxis" (KGW VIII-2, 351) by which Nietzsche means what Christ manifested in his life and actions. As with Luther's usage, it is *der eingefleischte Gott*—God made flesh, incarnate—to whom Nietzsche's attention is drawn. And, as the important is in what Christ did, not what he urged, what we might call Christ's being or identity was for Nietzsche never fixed. Indeed, much of Nietzsche's analysis of Christ sounds at times like all that which we normally associate with what Nietzsche seems to value. Christ, he says, is "a free spirit: he has nothing to do with that which is fixed (*allem Festen*). . . . He believes only in life and the living—and such 'is' not, such becomes" (KGW VIII-2, 406).

But one may respond that Nietzsche clearly is not preaching for Christ. And surely, he curses Christianity. Some commentators have here sought a tempting distinction between the founder and the institution—a sort of première cycle reading of the "Grand Inquisitor" chapter of *The Brothers Karamazov*—and argued that Nietzsche distinguishes the genius from the institutionalizing rationalist, in this case Christ from Saint Paul (about whom, it is true, Nietzsche has almost nothing favorable to say—see in particular the first two books of *Morgenröte*). This will not quite do. There has to be something in the manner in which Christ approached the world that is responsible for what happened. If Christ is presented so favorably—so free and without fixed form, thus so Dionysianly—something has to have gone wrong with what he manifests. Along these lines it is important to remember that Nietzsche does not think that Paul is the responsible person for the degeneration. He writes, "The Gospels are invaluable as evidence of the already irresistible corruption within the first community. What Paul later carried to its conclusions . . . was nonetheless merely the process of decay which commenced with the death of the redeemer" (A 44/ KGW VI-3 216).

The Dionysian being is "related to" Hamlet (see *Birth of Tragedy* 7), he who knows that there is no good reason for anything to have permanence, thus that nothing is or remains fixed or individuated. In *Der Antichrist*, Nietzsche considers Christ to have attacked all form: He "denies Church, state, society, art, knowledge, culture, civilization." Nietzsche associates this attack with "what

all wise ones (*alle Weisen*) have done" (A 44/ KGW VI-3 338). Christ's life, His praxis, is for Nietzsche a life of complete and perfected interiority, abandoning all relations to others, almost a kind of self-referential solipsism. A consequence and an indication of this for Nietzsche is that the life of Christ is only possible in isolation from society. At the beginning of *Z*, Zarathustra encounters an old man who has not yet heard that God is dead. Zarathustra hurries on, without telling the old man. The reason is not simply to spare him the news—Nietzsche rarely refrained from public pronouncements of this nature. The reason is that the life the old man lives—*imitatio Christi*—is in fact possible, but only as a hermit, only in isolation from society. From this it follows that the import and significance of the actuality of God's death has to do with its consequences for our relations with other beings. It is, I might say, political.

For Nietzsche, God is important in terms of human interaction, not just as a "belief." Along these lines, Nietzsche's discussion of Christ is resolutely non-world-historical. The significance Christ assumes is not as the head of the great social movement which we know as Christianity, but as a particular being, unique in the history of the world. In fact, Nietzsche declares that there "has been only one Christian and he died on the cross." Such a life, he continues, is still possible, not "as a faith but as a doing, a not-doing of many things above all, an other Being (*Nicht ein Glauben, sondern ein Thun, ein Vielesnicht-thun vor Allem, ein andres Sein*.)" (A 39/ KGW VI-3, 209).

What then was wrong with Christ? Except for forty days and the moment of His transfiguration, Christ chose not to live apart from society.[14] Christ establishes, however, a new way of life in which only so-called inner realities count. The Gospels, claims Nietzsche, totally annihilate the distance between God and humans. This is not a matter of faith or believing in something but of leading a "different" kind of life. Salvation—redemption—requires, impossibly of us, that we make it actual. The problem of Nietzsche is that "inner realities" abandon effectively all criteria of judgment and place an impossible and unfulfillable demand on humans—a demand that is the source of nihilism.

The most interior form of praxis possible is a requirement of and for love. In an important section of BGE, Nietzsche argues:

> It is possible that under the holy fable and disguise of Jesus' life there lies concealed one of the most painful cases of the martyrdom of knowledge of love: the martyrdom of the most innocent and desirous heart, never having enough of human love, demanding love, to be loved and nothing else, with hardness, maniacally (*mit Wahnsinn*), with terrible eruptions against those who

> denied him love, the story of an unfortunate person, unsatiated and insatiable in love, who had to invent hell in order to send to it those who did not want to love him—and who finally, having gained knowledge about human love, had to invent a God who is all love, all ability to love—who has mercy on human love because it is utterly so wretched and unknowing. Anyone who feels that way, who knows this about love—seeks death. (BGE 269/ KGW VI-2, 235)

This passage occurs in the section of BGE entitled "what is noble." It is immediately preceded by the claim that one who knows the heart will know that "even the best and profoundest love" is "more likely to destroy than to save." There is an opposition here between godly and human love. The question is why does Christ's love require of him that He seek love, to be loved, that He command love: "Thou shalt love." Key, I think, to this passage is that Christ is seen as "never having enough" of human love. There is no satiation, none of that state which makes the ecstasy of love and the actuality of beholding possible. The indication in the passage is that Christ's love found or must find human love insufficient—"Love God as I love Him." In terms of the analysis of audience and exemplars I have analyzed elsewhere, we might say that Christ could never be an audience to himself. (If this is so, the most difficult moment for Nietzsche to grasp fully must be the scene in Gethsemane, before the arrest. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt" (Mt. 26:39). It is the moment of Christ's supreme humanity. For Nietzsche it is a suicide.)

What is it about Christ's life that might make this so? Again, it is the life He lived that must be the problem for Nietzsche. His life is "the road towards a holy mode of existence." So it leads him toward death, to what Nietzsche explicitly calls a suicide disguised as a judicial murder, one which Nietzsche thinks is the same in mode as that of Socrates (AOM 94 / KGW IV-3, 50). This happens because in the fulfillment of the teachings of Christ (if we were to live them) "we understand all, we live all, we no longer retain any hostile feelings." We claim that "all is good—and that it gives us pain, to deny anything. We suffer if we were once to be so unintelligent as to take a stand against something" (KGW VIII-2, 409).

What does Christ know about love that leads Him to seek death? I think it is something like this. The exclusivity of love as interiority means that the only way to overcome the existence of evil is to bring it inside you and transform it in one's self. In his essay "Experience," Emerson writes critically on this topic: "Conscience must feel [sin] as essence, essential evil. This it is not: it has an

objective existence, but no subjective" (Emerson, R. 1978: 489).[15] In other words, Emerson is saying that evil is not, cannot, and should not, be subjective. It is only actual or concrete (there is a deep criticism of Hegel here): one can only take a stand against it. One cannot take it on or into oneself—one cannot bear "the sins of the world." For Nietzsche, what is wrong with Christ's love is that it pushes him to justify his life by requiring that others love Him. Since He is all love, in Him all evil will be redeemed. I cannot replay it here, but Nietzsche is opposed to the very idea of redemption as a way of dealing with the weight of the past (redemption is an overcoming rather than a transfiguration of the past), as I hope my analysis of the "On Redemption" chapter in *Zarathustra* showed.[16]

The centrality of love in Christianity derives from the Scriptures—"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life" (Jn 3:16). It remains central to Christian doctrine. Augustine made love central to his understanding of human action, incorporating into it the direction or object of love. Calvin took up Augustine's challenge against what he took to be the legalism of Catholicism. In the Institutes, he writes that a central part of "Christian liberty" is that one be released from the "yoke of the law so that God's love may be available, as it were to a loving son and not to a terrified servant" (Calvin 1846: 19). He is calling on us to love God as Christ did, "as his son."

To think then about Christ on love, we have also to think about the status of the law in Nietzsche.[17] The law, he writes, has been most at home in the realm of the "active strong, spontaneous, and aggressive" individuals (GM II: 11/KGW VI-2, 327). The founding of law is thus an opposite of ressentiment; and ressentiment is explicitly linked by Nietzsche with anarchists and anti-Semites. The Christ-like opposition to law as a mode of governing behavior is thus complexly linked to Nietzsche's understanding of his relation to the Jews (and casts light on his celebration of the Laws of Manu). In AC 24 he notes that the "redeemer's formula" is "Salvation comes from [is of] the Jews"—"*Das Heil kommt von den Juden*" (quoting Jn 4:22).

I cannot explore this at length here. Suffice it to say that the Jews are the people of the law and as such are a people of affirmation and aggression. This is because the law, as understood here, is not just everyday law but is rather the establishment of good and evil, a way of organizing the world, a manifestation of a positive will to power. The law is a creation of horizons, and horizons are, we know from Kant and Nietzsche, the condition of life.

From this it seems that one way of not being a person of the law is to focus, as does Christ, entirely on interiority. Christ, however, was the only Christian and "he died on the cross"—that is, He succeeded but only as the exceptional case and thus a dangerous exemplar. This imperative toward innerness, toward privacy and away from others has special consequences. Christ loves everyone, unconditionally. Such a great and unselfish affirmation destroys all horizons, all that might shape the world in his teaching. Christ's love is a kind of absolute freedom and terror—"*sois mon frère ou je te tue*" said Babeuf during the French Revolution. The universality of Christ's love orders that all love him. Nietzsche here points to a relation between the moral structure of Christianity and the Terror. "I hate Rousseau in the Revolution," he writes in *Twilight*.

"What have we to do with the law?" By demanding a life outside and beyond any structure or organization Christ makes impossible or unnecessary any form of organized human existence. (Christianity, notes Nietzsche in 1888, is the "abolition of the state" (KGW VIII-2, 337)—which should make one think twice about what Nietzsche might have to say about the state.) And this also renders impossible that seeing which is at the same time overlooking that was necessary for health or love. "The wisest man would be the richest in contradictions; he, as it were, has feelers for all kinds of men; and right among them has his great moments of grandiose harmony." Nietzsche refers to this state as one of justice (KGW VII-2, 179–80).[18]

Yet, humans are drawn toward the life of Christ, a life that dissolves itself: Why and how? The Gospels, in Nietzsche's reading in *Der Antichrist*, in fact seduce by "means of morality" (A 44/ KGW VI-3, 218). They promise, that is, that the rewards for moral behavior will occur by means of redemption. Redemption is, however, the stance that one can by one's own actions (or by no actions at all) find oneself being changed. Other beings are not necessary. The problem with morality thus appears to occur for Nietzsche when humans—especially loving humans—deny that they are in contact with others. Paradoxically, morality is thus a form of an alleviation of the problem of skepticism or of other minds, without ever doing away with the threat of skepticism. If this is true, then the Christian need not make any distinctions between those he or she encounters, which means that paradoxically to be redeemed the Christian need encounter no other person. Here I might note that when one is behind the veil of ignorance (as in the work of John Rawls), there is no need to talk to anyone else as all are expected to come up with the same judgments if reasonable and rational—Rawls remained a Christian, as his undergraduate thesis shows us. All this is (of

course) disguised. In HH, Nietzsche notes the cleverness of Christianity to have focused on love:

> There is in the word love something so ambiguous and suggestive, something which speaks to the memory and future hope, that even the meanest intelligence and coldest heart still feels something of the luster of this word. The shrewdest (*klugste*) woman and the commonest man think when they hear it of the relatively least selfish moments of their whole life, even if Eros has paid them only a passing visit; and those countless numbers who never experience love, of parents of children, or lovers, especially, however, when the women and men of sublimated Christianity, have made their discovery (*Fund gemacht*) in Christianity. (AOM 95 /KGW IV-1, 50–51)

Love can go wrong. This passage is an argument against the use that Christianity makes of Eros, a subject to which Nietzsche occasionally returned. But it is more interesting as a reflection on love and the status of the self that loves. Compare it, for instance, to this passage in SE. Nietzsche has just suggested that the fundamental import of what he calls culture is to "further the production of the philosopher, of the artist and the saint within and without us." The philosopher makes becoming available to us; the artist makes "a clear and distinct image" of what is never seen "in the flux of becoming." The saint is the person whose "individual ego has entirely melted away and who feels his suffering life as an identity, affinity, and unity with all that is living. . . . There is no doubt that we are all related and connected to this saint as we are to the philosopher and the artist; there are moments and, as it were, sparks of the brightest fire of love in the light of which we no longer understand the word 'I'" (SE 5 /KGW III-1, 378). Note, by the way the democracy: "we are all related."

Nietzsche goes on to applaud this state as at the root of our hatred of ourselves (thus our ability to be outside ourselves) and thus of the pessimism that Schopenhauer sought to "reteach our age." Love breaks down the Apollonian (hence the Dionysian elements in Christ). Like its parent Eros, it is the dissolution of definition. It is dis-individuation, the deconstruction of limits.

But alone it cannot suffice. The problem with Christ is that his knowledge of love leads him to want death. Death is a dissolution—so much Nietzsche had got from Schopenhauer. Love is a form of death in this sense—so much Nietzsche had recognized in Wagner; Freud will find here the source of his understanding of the erotic. In fact, should two be in love with each other (which is not the exemplar/education model) a species of madness results. Nietzsche writes, "Both parties . . . consequently abandon themselves and want to be the same as

one another." In the end, neither knows what for him or her is supposed to be an exemplar, what is to be dissimulated, what is pretense. He writes in *Morgenröte*: "The beautiful madness of this spectacle is too good for this world and too subtle for human eyes" (D 532/ KGW V-1, 308). Love in itself produces nothing that can continue in this world.

So where does the Antichrist come from—what gives rise to (I presume) him? In the notes that did not make it into the final version of *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche indicates that he could not have accomplished what he had were he not to have been the descendant of Protestant ministers. He pursues the implication: "My formula for that: the Antichrist is himself the necessary logical development of an authentic Christian, in me Christianity itself is overcome" (KGW VIII-3, 425).[19] The Antichrist is not a simply dialectical opponent to Christ—he is the possible (although not necessary) logical development of that which Christianity starts. He is, one might say, the Messiah for a world that is not Christian. And here we extend the meanings of *Der Antichrist*. *Khristos* is the Greek for "messiah." Hence the Antichrist is also the anti-Messiah Messiah.

So the question must be what is loved. For Christ and God this is clear. I noted the great commandments above. God loves the world. But whom do humans love? They love God with all their heart and mind and strength; and they love their neighbors as themselves. Do they love themselves? In the way they love God, I suppose. But what is left for our neighbors if we must love them when we love God unconditionally and with the sundering intensity that Nietzsche attributes to Christ. Christ really did love others as he loved himself as he loved God. And that is death. Such love loves not wisely but too well—as Othello discovered and Nietzsche intimates Christ knew (See KGW VIII-3, 336).

In other words, God and Christ do not function as what Nietzsche, in SE, called exemplars: we cannot, in fact, find in them the self that is our self but not yet our self, (we cannot *genoi hoios essi*—become what [we] are). Why then the attraction? There are two important lessons here. First, morality is what keeps us from dying on the cross. Morality thus preserves a life that is constantly seeking to deny itself in love. There is an indication in *The Antichrist* that humanity has become addicted to "moraline," that is, to a dangerous and destructive drug which, however, one cannot do without. We constantly run toward God and must at the same time make it impossible for us to reach Him. The problem with Christianity is that it requires that we be moral if we are to remain alive—a conclusion not dissimilar to that which Freud was to reach in *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*—"The Uneasiness in the Culture,"

problematically given in English as *Civilization and Its Discontents*. This is a form of nihilism. But it also means that not anyone, as any time, can, for any reason, simply shake off the demands of morality. To continue the drug metaphor (and it is not just a metaphor), one cannot go cold turkey on morality without a serious reaction—and the danger that humanity might in this century do so is at the source of Nietzsche's distress about the century he foresaw. This is what sons of God have to do with morals.

Second is the lesson that Cordelia tried to teach her father. To love according to one's bond, that is according to what one is—is all that can be required and no more should be expected. In the refusal of the acknowledgment of this lesson, there is only silence, or death—the nothing that comes of nothing. Such silence—the still between two soundings, Nietzsche calls it—is the only possible human acknowledgment of the absolute.

It is noteworthy that in *Der Antichrist* Nietzsche counterposes himself to morality as a "Hyperborean," as, that is, a worshiper of Apollo during the winter months (A 7/ KGW VI-3, 172). He suggests that his love of humans is such as to excise the emotion of pity from human beings. In a late note, he remarks that the Hyperborean is in fact a particular kind of philosopher: "One who is in no ways a moralist." In fact, not being a moralist is the only path to bringing "philosophy back into respect" (KGW VIII-3, 411–12).[20] For: "There is nothing for it; there is no other way to bring philosophy back to honor but to hang all the moralists" (KGW VIII-3, 412).

The demands of Christ lead to death; we resist death by means of morality; morality keeps philosophy from happening: it transforms the human love that allows one to be besides oneself and thus always with oneself into one that requires that one be dissolved into God. Christian love—modeled on the example of Christ—was a form of solipsism, a solipsism only mitigated by morality and the promise of redemption. The costs of the moral point of view, Nietzsche suggests, will be "hecatombs" (KGW VIII-3, 413), for after the death of God, there will be no limits to what can be called "good" and the moral point of view will justify even the most horrific of crimes.

Against this Nietzsche occasionally counterposes what he calls "human love." As he found himself in diagnostic exploration of the will to morality he found himself increasingly alone. The denial of the universally applicable moral point of view had seemed to leave only death open as a way of making contact with others. He indicates, therefore, that he sought form. "I had artificially to enforce, falsify, and invent a suitable fiction for myself." What he needed, he continues,

was the belief that he was not alone, that he was not thus isolated and not alone in seeing as he did (HH P1 /KGW IV-2, 8). Recognizing that life requires deception, he deceived himself. Recognizing this, he indicates in a letter to Overbeck on February 3, 1888, that his writing must henceforth find release in attack. "No one would expect a suffering and starving animal to attack its prey gracefully. The perpetual lack of a really refreshing and healing human love, the absurd isolation it entails, makes almost any residue of a connection with people merely something that wounds one." It is worth noting that Elisabeth forges a letter dated about the time of this one to the effect that Nietzsche is longing for female companionship—hers in fact. In her usual perverse way, she understood something of her brother.

The perversion of love in Christianity means that we are in danger of seeking an ideal in which to lose ourselves. And this is not just of what one might be tempted to at the political level. "We must keep ourselves from becoming an ideal of another," Nietzsche writes in around 1880 (Nietzsche 1961: 296). At all costs, then, we must keep a distance on the other and on ourselves. This, however, can only be done by living in and of, and only in and only of, this world. If we run outside it, we not only will deny the actuality of evil (in the name of love) but we will be unable to tolerate the existence of others. We need, he writes in the 1886 preface to HH, "a blindness for two." Arendt saw this as the basis of *amor mundi*. Or, as Wallace Stevens wrote in "Of Modern Poetry":

> It has to be living, to learn the speech of the place.
> It has to face the men of the time and to meet
> The women of the time. It has to think about war
> And it has to find what will suffice. It has
> To construct a new stage.

This is where and how we find ourselves.

Notes

1 All citations from Nietzsche's writings are from KGW. All translations are my own.
2 For the political toleration, see Lenin, "The Attitude of the Workers' Party towards Religion" *Collected Works* 15, 402–13; "Socialism and Religion," *Collected Works* 10, 83–87.
3 See Breidenthal 1998: 489–503.
4 This understanding of nihilism was present in my doctoral thesis (1968), later my first book (1975). As Cavell says: "Nietzsche was not crazy when he blamed

Christianity for most of the world's ills, although he may have been too crazy about the idea." That said, Cavell also has a complex respect for Christianity. See Dahl 2010: 931–45.

5 It is worth noting here that some forms of Christianity (original Calvinism, for example) precisely because of an anxiety about a ledger mentality hold that the actuality of redemption is in principle unknowable.

6 Shapiro (2016: 171–72) comments on the same passage.

7 Compare Weber 1968: 23: "Now the gods have been deprived of the magical and mythical but inwardly true qualities that gave them such vivid immediacy."

8 See Kofman 1991.

9 See Strong 2003.

10 See Kant 1968: 85: "We must not [in love] by an egotistical illusion subtract anything from the authority of the law." See also Kant 1971: 447. See Baier 1992: 228–42. I am conscious here of Nussbaum, Chapters 13 and 14.

11 See Herman 1993.

12 Walter Kaufmann thinks this refers to Moses.

13 Copleston (1942) expresses the surprise of a Jesuit who cannot quite figure out why Nietzsche seems to dislike Christ. See also Jaspers 1961. One must resist the tendency to assert in a more or less sophisticated fashion the claim that Nietzsche never quite got rid of his childhood and that both his rejection and fascination with Christ are due to that. See Biser (1981) as well as Hohmann: "His existence (*Dasein*) was a tension between evasion and rebellion" (1984: 69).

14 It is perhaps telling that the transfiguration is followed immediately by the casting out of the evil spirit in a boy.

15 I owe a debt here to the chapter "On Political Evil" in Kateb (1992).

16 See Strong 2001: 221–37.

17 Some material here draws on Kofman 2004.

18 See Heidegger 1961: 632f.

19 This was written in October–November of 1888: note that he is still capable of intentional editing of his work.

20 KGW VIII-3, 411–12: "As long as philosophy continues to speak of happiness and virtue only old ladies will be persuaded to go into philosophy."

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8

Nihilism, Naturalism, and the Will to Power in Nietzsche's *The Antichrist*

Christian J. Emden

1

Nihilism is an integral part of Nietzsche's philosophical project. He begins to use the term "nihilism" for the first time in the summer of 1880, and although his discussion of nihilism culminates in 1886 and 1887, already his much earlier account of "pessimism" is connected to philosophical tropes of nothingness since the late 1860s.[1] Nihilism, as Nietzsche conceives of the latter in his late writings, is, however, fundamentally different from modern pessimism. Furthermore, the interesting question is not whether, or not, he views himself as a nihilist (Danto 1965, 22 and 30–33, and Schacht 1995, 35–61). Rather, it is whether Nietzsche's philosophical project aims at overcoming nihilism, and this question is best answered by relating his discussion of nihilism to the overall naturalistic commitments of his philosophical project, which also includes the will to power.

Nietzsche's *The Antichrist*, written in 1888 and published only in 1895, can easily be understood as presenting a strong argument for the overcoming of nihilism. Indeed, already in the first few paragraphs, Nietzsche introduces a far-reaching opposition between "happiness," on the one hand, and the "*nihilistic* values" of Christianity, on the other (A 1 and 6). It seems that nihilism stands in a clear opposition to life and nature as they become manifest in the will to power; nihilism emerges on the grounds of a distinctly Christian moral doctrine of pity and selflessness that specifically despises and rejects the natural conditions of what we regard as being human.[2] If nihilism, then, entails the rejection of life, and thus leads to despair about what we, as human beings, really are, overcoming nihilism would have to constitute an affirmation of life (Reginster 2006 and Brock 2015, 338–86). Although I am going to argue that Nietzsche,

neither in *The Antichrist* nor elsewhere, fully embraces such a straightforward opposition between nihilism and nature, one of the most famous passages of *The Antichrist* seems to point into exactly this direction:

> I consider life to be an instinct for growth, for endurance, for the accumulation of force, for *power*: where there is no will to power, there is decline. My claim is that *none* of humanity's highest values have had this will—that *nihilistic* values, values of decline, have taken control under the aegis of the holiest names. (A 6)

The way in which Nietzsche, in this passage and throughout *The Antichrist*, integrates nihilism into a discourse of decline and *décadence* that is intrinsic to the Judeo-Christian tradition at large obviously suggests that his central interest must be the overcoming of nihilism (Kuhn 1992, 250–55).[3] Moreover, overcoming nihilism seems a necessary part of his wider philosophical project, since nihilism is inextricably bound up with metaphysical and moral claims that are central not only to Christianity but also to German idealism as a quasi-secular extension of Protestant Christianity: "Nihilist and Christian: this rhymes, it does more than just rhyme," he famously notes (A 58). Even though the transcendental philosophy of German idealism—in particular idealism of the Kantian kind—dissolves God into the "thing-in-itself," it continues to stipulate the existence of an authentic "world of being" beyond the mere appearances of nature that mark human life (A 17).

It is at this moment, however, that a peculiar problem begins to arise as soon as we relate Nietzsche's seemingly straightforward claims in *The Antichrist* to some of his earlier work, such as the final essay of GM (1887). In the latter case, Nietzsche clearly presents Christianity as a prime example for the "ascetic ideal," and even though the ascetic ideal entails a "will to nothingness," and therefore "nihilism," willing nothingness "remains a *will*" (GM III: 14 and 28). But if willing nothingness remains a will, then it also has to be understood as a manifestation of the "will to power": even the ascetic ideal, albeit in an indirect fashion, is "life-affirming" despite its denial of the value of life (GM III: 18). The denial of life, as it is central to Christian moral thought, ultimately requires a surprising "intellectual rigour" that places considerable emphasis on the critical value of truth, which in turn complicates the seemingly clear-cut opposition between nihilism and the will to power as it appears at the beginning of *The Antichrist*.

In the final essay of GM, Nietzsche also identifies the "nihilists" with the "Antichrists," the "immoralists," and the "sceptics," whom he generally holds in rather high regard as precisely those free spirits that are able to step outside

traditional moral philosophy (GM III: 24). To be sure, it is not the case that Nietzsche seeks to attribute to Christianity a positive dimension, or a conscious form of critique that openly reflects on the natural preconditions of Christian moral doctrine. Rather, because Christianity, adhering to an ascetic ideal, is also committed to the value of truth, it is eventually bound to turn against itself, albeit unintentionally. The seemingly nihilistic rejection of life Nietzsche criticizes in *The Antichrist* always already entails its exact opposite: the life-affirming possibility of new and different values (GM III: 27). Nihilism, in other words, does not simply claim that life is meaningless, or that life has to be rejected, but it entails the possibility of values. Philosophically as much as historically, nihilism is the condition under which new values are able to emerge:

> All great things bring about their own demise through an act of self-sublimation: that is the law of life, the law of *necessary* "self-overcoming" in the essence of life—the lawgiver himself is always ultimately exposed to the cry: "*patere legem, quam ipse tulisti*." In this way, Christianity *as a dogma* was destroyed by its own morality, in the same way Christianity *as a morality* must also be destroyed—we stand on the threshold of *this* occurrence. After Christian truthfulness has drawn one conclusion after another, it will finally draw the *strongest conclusion*, that *against* itself; this will, however, happen when it asks itself, "*What does all will to truth mean?*" . . . and here I touch on my problem again, on *our* problem . . .: what meaning does *our* being have, if it were not that that will to truth has become conscious of itself *as a problem* in us? . . . Without a doubt, from now on, morality will be *destroyed* by the will to truth's becoming-conscious-of-itself: that great drama in a hundred acts reserved for Europe in the next two centuries, the most terrible, most dubious drama but perhaps also the one most rich in hope. (GM III: 27)

What Nietzsche underscores in this passage is the complex philosophical ambiguity of nihilism, as opposed to a merely pejorative use of the term "nihilism."[4] First of all, that all "great things" will eventually bring about their own demise and decay cannot be limited to Christian moral doctrine, but it must also include any appeal to the affirmation of life as a specific value that, for Nietzsche, is supposed to be constitutive of human agency and, as such, is able to guide human agency in an otherwise meaningless world.[5] If overcoming nihilism, and thus overcoming the life-denying values of Christian doctrine, should really lead to some sort of normative practical autonomy for human beings *qua* natural beings, since these beings now have to make their own values, then it must also be the case that these new values, much like the assumption of autonomy's normative import, will eventually be subject to their "*necessary*

'self-overcoming'": whatever the overcoming of nihilism might lead to, this will also need to be overcome and thus necessarily lead back into nihilism. What keeps this process alive, as a manifestation of the will to power, is the "will to truth," and it is important to recognize that, for Nietzsche, this will to truth remains "*a problem* in us": as a problem it cannot be resolved, because it is in us as natural beings. The will to truth—as a will to value truth—is part of what we are as natural beings, and as natural beings we cannot really ever overcome nihilism. On the one hand, as Nietzsche clearly points out, this situation is "terrible" in the sense that any affirmation of life entails tragedy; on the other hand, it is also a situation "most rich in hope" in the sense that it allows for the tragic affirmation of life, and thus the creation of new values, to occur. Nihilism is not the opposite of the affirmation of life, but it is bound up with the latter to such an extent that the one always is the condition of the other.

This ambiguity of nihilism also comes to the fore in the death of God which, in GS (1882/87), is the philosophical center piece of nihilism in European modernity. That "God is dead" is, for Nietzsche, "the greatest recent event" through which the normative order of the Christian tradition has finally destroyed itself, but the resulting experience of nihilism is "not at all sad and gloomy"—after all, the death of God or, rather, the self-destruction of the metaphysical belief in a transcendent but somehow personal God opens up the possibility to properly examine the value of having values, so that "finally the horizon seems clear again, even if not bright" (GS 343).

The ambiguity that pertains to philosophical nihilism, and that is crucial for the discussion of nihilism in GS and GM, certainly sets Nietzsche apart from a range of philosophers, dating back to the late eighteenth century, who have used the term mainly in its pejorative sense in sweeping attacks on the seemingly formal emptiness of German idealism from Kant to Fichte and Hegel (Obereit 1787, 54–56; Obereit 1792; Jenisch 1796).[6] Moreover, since nihilism, for Nietzsche, allows for the creation of values in an otherwise entirely meaningless world characterized only by the interplay of necessity and contingency, Nietzsche's account of nihilism shares central features of Fichte's and Hegel's discussions of the conditions on thinking, which their critics were quick to reject as nihilism (Jacobi 1799 and Weisse 1833). For Fichte, before the self can postulate an empirical world of things and a normative world of values, the self needs to posit itself from nothing as the condition of the world of things and values (Fichte 1982 [1794–95], 100–01). "*The self*," he notes, "*begins by an absolute positing of its own existence*. . . . Everything that exists does so only insofar as it is posited in the self, and apart from the self there is

nothing" (Fichte 1982 [1794–95], 99–100). For Hegel, the only way to overcome the dilemma of being and nothingness—that the self was able to posit itself in nothingness—was through the paradoxical argument that being and nothing, in a specific respect, were essentially the same (Hegel 1969–71 [1812–16], 82–83 and 93–96). "Pure *Being*," he suggested somewhat apodictically, "makes the beginning: because it is on one hand pure thought, and on the other immediacy itself, simple and indeterminate" (Hegel 1975 [1817], 124, §86). Pure being, in this respect, is not yet determined as the being of something.

While Nietzsche would certainly take offense at the language of transcendental idealism that marks Fichte's and Hegel's discussions of nothingness, the indeterminate situation that is the result of the death of God in GS, and that opens up the horizon to the possibility of creating and setting new values, is remarkably close to Fichte's and Hegel's accounts of the conditions of thinking. The crucial difference, however, is that Nietzsche integrates this indeterminacy into a philosophical naturalism that also stands in the background of his discussion of nihilism in *The Antichrist*:

> The total character of the world . . . is for all eternity chaos, not in the sense of a lack of necessity but of a lack of order, organization, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever else our aesthetic anthropomorphisms are called. . . . Let us beware of saying that there are laws in nature. There are only necessities: there is no one who commands, no one who obeys, no one who transgresses. Once you know that there are no purposes, you also know that there is no accident; for only against a world of purposes does the word "accident" have a meaning. (GS 109)

For Nietzsche, this insight in the world's lack of meaning and purpose also implies that norms and values lack any authority, or standard, beyond the human world in which they emerge. Nihilism, then, does not merely state that life is meaningless, or that there is no meaning to begin with; rather, since nihilism is the consequence of the will to truth, it poses the normative question: how should any norms and values even be possible in a world entirely devoid of such values and norms? Although this might be counterintuitive, I will argue that this question also guides Nietzsche's discussion of nihilism in *The Antichrist*.

2

Against the background of what I have noted thus far, it seems questionable that the opposition between a life-denying nihilism that is central to Christianity,

on the one hand, and the affirmation of life, on the other, is quite as clear-cut as often assumed. This does not mean, however, that Nietzsche's position has developed into a different direction in the aftermath of the essays GM, or that, in *The Antichrist*, he begins to contradict himself, or his earlier arguments. Rather, we have to understand his reflections on nihilism in *The Antichrist* not merely as part of a broader attack on Christianity, but also as reflecting a continued commitment to philosophical naturalism. In *The Antichrist* he is, indeed, quite clear about this commitment, when he notes, for instance, that "we have stuck human beings back among the animals" and that "humans are in no way the crown of creation" and therefore not better, or distinct from, the rest of what we regard as living nature (A 14).

Nevertheless, recent discussions of Nietzsche's account of nihilism, albeit often committed to some form of naturalism, have taken the argument into a different direction by pointing to the fairly straightforward opposition between nihilism and the affirmation of life that also appears in the opening passages of *The Antichrist*. In a strange and unlikely philosophical alliance between Martin Heidegger's assessment of nihilism as a manifestation of the crisis of Western culture, on the one hand, and recent analytic commentators, on the other, Nietzsche's philosophical project is seen as highlighting the need to overcome nihilism (Heidegger 2009 [1933], 112; Heidegger 2002 [1943], 163–64; Heidegger 1979–87 [1961], IV, 1–58). Ofelia Schutte, for instance, claimed that, although Nietzsche himself cannot always avoid nihilism, his philosophical project seeks to reach "beyond nihilism" and that his discussion of nihilism is aimed at "overcoming and transcending nihilism" (Schutte 1984, xi, 4, 7, 87–88, 97, 146, and 190). Although Bernard Reginster accepted the ambiguous nature of Nietzsche's conception of nihilism, his reduction of nihilism to an exclusively psychological experience with existential implications likewise forces him to think of the task of Nietzsche's philosophy along the lines of overcoming nihilism: since nihilism claims that life has no meaning, Nietzsche has to advocate for a conception of "life," in the psychological sense of the term, that is "inspired" by a "goal" and a "faith" (Reginster 2006, 23–24). The latter might only be relevant as a corrective to nihilism as long as this goal is experienced as valuable and, at the same time, actually achievable in the real world, but behind such claims also stands the vision of an existentially authentic life that bears strong metaphysical overtones which Nietzsche himself, presumably, would have viewed with some skepticism. Nevertheless, Brian Leiter has also attributed to Nietzsche a position that short-circuits nihilism with the psychological experience of "despair," and

such despair comes to the fore especially in cases of meaningless suffering (Leiter 2014, 196 and 206–08). Although there are other kinds of nihilism occasionally to be discovered in Nietzsche's writings, Leiter suggests, what Nietzsche ultimately seeks to correct is a "suicidal nihilism" that renders any normative commitments and any evaluative stance toward life impossible (Leiter 2014, 211, 214, and 228–30). Most worryingly, however, Julian Young argues from what seems to be an existentially tinged religious perspective that Nietzsche's philosophy is not only a response to nihilism as such, but that nihilism is simply the loss of an ultimate goal or meaning (Young 2006, 124–30, 167, and 179).

It is not difficult to see that Young's discussion of nihilism transforms Nietzsche's philosophy into a metaphysics with Heideggerian overtones. But the language of inspiration, goal, and achievement, and the denigration of meaningless suffering, that are central to Schutte's, Reginster's, and Leiter's account also need to be taken with some caution. I have already suggested that behind such language stands a commitment to an authentically meaningful life as a normative standard that cannot anymore be questioned and that is remarkably close to Heidegger's conception of authentic being.[7] Although Reginster and Leiter, mainly because of their emphasis on moral psychology and meta-ethics, probably would not regard Nietzsche's philosophical project as an exercise in metaphysics in the narrow sense of the term, the question remains whether overcoming nihilism always has to entertain metaphysical commitments that would prove difficult to justify on the grounds of Nietzsche's project. Perhaps Theodor W. Adorno was right, after all, when he noted, with an eye on Heidegger: "Acts of overcoming—even of nihilism . . .—are always worse than what they overcome" (Adorno 1973, 380).

Second, Reginster and Leiter in particular view Nietzsche's discussion of nihilism in predominantly psychological terms: nihilism is best understood along the lines of a nihilistic despair that exacerbates the meaninglessness of life by evaluating negatively everything that belongs to life. As a consequence, Leiter tends to bring Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism into close proximity to Arthur Schopenhauer's account of pessimism, while Reginster views nihilism almost entirely through the lens of pessimism (Leiter 2014, 43–44, and Reginster 2006, 28–33). Overcoming pessimism, however, is not the same as overcoming nihilism. Pessimism consists in the assumption that, throughout human life and history, harm and suffering outweigh both pleasure and the moral good, so that, as far as human agency is concerned, it will always be necessary to expect that our actions have negative consequences. As such,

pessimism requires a normative standard that is external to pessimism itself and according to which we can evaluate that harm and suffering actually do outweigh pleasure and life. Nietzsche, as we shall see later, rejects any such external normative standard. Moreover, he views the kinds of pessimism that leads to despair as a specifically modern phenomenon; it is, in short, a romantic attitude of "excessive sensibility" that fails to understand the reality of human suffering in a truly meaningless world (GS 48). The crucial point is not that meaningless suffering has to be overcome, but it is rather that the affirmation of life has to accept the meaninglessness of suffering.

In contrast to pessimism, nihilism implies the more radical claim that moral and epistemic values cannot exist as a normative standard that is external to our life as natural beings. In a world that is inherently meaningless, the values we create out of necessity can always become subject to a revaluation as soon as our will to truth leads to a radical form of skepticism that unearths the meaninglessness of the world. Behind every skepticism, every critique, stands nihilism. But instead of, thus, opting for a philosophy of pessimist despair, Nietzsche comes to accept a "completely de-deified nature" in order to "*naturalize* humanity," that is, in order to recognize that what we regard as the normative world we live in simply cannot be separated from our meaningless existence as natural beings (GS 109). Nihilism offers a glimpse into the fundamental paradox of normativity as it comes to the fore in modern philosophy: the death of God clearly shows that there are no external authorities that in any way safeguard the binding force of the normative commitments we make, both epistemically as much as ethically, and yet we cannot escape these normative claims as natural beings.

3

In order to understand more clearly how Nietzsche's naturalistic commitments undercut the seemingly straightforward opposition between nihilism and the affirmation of life, it is necessary to move away from a primarily psychological conception of nihilism and human flourishing. This will also allow us to recognize that, like the ascetic ideal in GM, the nihilism entailed by Christian moral thought and, by extension, German idealism, remains an expression of the will to power. If this is, indeed, the case, we also have to realize that nihilism does not stand in opposition to the will to power and the affirmation of life, but the will to power is always bound up with nihilism and

behind the affirmation of life always stands nihilism as that which allows us to affirm life in the first place.

In the opening sections of *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche's understanding of life is not of a psychological kind, but it is grounded in biology. This already becomes obvious when he defines "life" in terms of an "instinct for growth" and "for *power*," that is, as another term for what he describes as the "will to power" (A 6).[8] Although his use of the term "instinct" seems to imply a psychological conception of the will to power, his claim about the will to power does not simply refer to "people's feeling of power," but it rather refers to power itself as something of which this feeling is a manifestation: "What is good? Everything that enhances people's feeling of power, will to power, power itself" (A 2). Since the will to power cannot be enhanced by something outside itself, what enhances people's feeling of power is the will to power, or to put it differently: the feeling of power is an irreducible mental state that emerges from the will to power.

Precisely because Nietzsche conceives of the will to power in a biological sense, he is able to argue that we should will a different "type of human being" able to avoid the pitfalls of Christianity's rejection of life; only such a new type of human being would be able to have a "future" (A 3). The task that he sets out for himself in *The Antichrist* is not only a sustained attack on the life-denying effects of Christianity, but also the provision of an answer to the question what kind of being might be able to avoid these negative effects. When he asks "What type of human being should be *bred*?" (A 3), it is first of all necessary to situate this reference to "breeding" in the broader context of his writings. In BGE (1886), for instance, he clearly views the emergence of a normative order in society as the result of such breeding:

> For as long as there have been people, there have been herds of people as well (racial groups, communities, tribes, folk, states, churches), and a very large number of people who obey compared to relatively few who command. So, considering the fact that humanity has been the best and most long-standing breeding ground for the cultivation of obedience so far, it is reasonable to suppose that the average person has an innate need to obey as a type of *formal conscience* that commands: "Thou shalt unconditionally do something, unconditionally not do something," in short: "Thou shalt." (BGE 199)

Nietzsche's appeal to "breeding" and "innate needs" to describe the emergence of normative order certainly implies that the latter is the consequence of humanity's natural history, which must also include Christian moral doctrine

and metaphysics. Even Nietzsche's alternative to the life-denying nihilism of Christian morality—the "new philosophers" and "free spirits"—does not undercut the natural history of this normative order. A new kind of human being that has accepted the implications of the death of God, and that has found a new kind of autonomy that put her into the position of "a new type of . . . commander," would still be constrained by the natural history of the normative order that allows for this realization of autonomy to happen (BGE 203). Seen from this perspective, "breeding" is a descriptive term that refers to precisely the kind of practices which make us, as human beings, part of the natural world. Not only the "morality of the herd" is a result of such breeding, but so is "an aristocratic community (such as Venice or an ancient Greek *polis*)" which runs counter to the morality of the herd (BGE 262). For both the Christian and for the free spirit or philosopher of the future, the reality of life is simply that they have been "bred":

> The project of *domesticating* the human beast as well as the project of *breeding* a certain species of human have both been called "improvements": only by using these zoological terms can we begin to express the realities here—realities, of course, that the typical proponents of "improvement," the priests, do not know anything about, do not *want* to know anything about. (TI VII: 2)[9]

It is precisely this natural history of breeding—as Nietzsche points out in TI, written in the same year as *The Antichrist*—that Christianity specifically denies, despite the fact that it is itself a product of this natural history. This also implies, however, that, for Nietzsche, Christian nihilism is itself part of our natural history, but the very same natural history also opens the door to breeding a different kind of human committed to the affirmation of her own natural preconditions on the grounds of nihilism. As such, the herd morality and the new human being who is supposed to overcome the nihilism of this herd morality are the result of the same natural history, even though the kind of human being Nietzsche envisions as overcoming the denial of life seems "terrible" from the perspective of the Christian herd animal (A 3).

Keeping in mind Nietzsche's discussion of breeding throughout the 1880s, it now becomes more obvious why he is able to claim that "the human is an *endpoint*" (A 3), which surely implies that we cannot simply overcome what we already are: the human being that, in *The Antichrist* seems intent on overcoming Christianity's nihilism is not different from human beings in general, but it is a variation of what already exists and what always has been possible. The "nobles" Nietzsche discusses in GM might be a counterfactual

example of this human being that he seems to pit against the life-denying nihilism of Christianity, but in *The Antichrist* his reference is specifically of a historical kind. The new human being that should be bred, as it were, subscribes to a set of moral values that more directly reflect this human being's own natural history: "Virtue in the style of the Renaissance, *virtù*, moraline-free virtue" (A 2).

Nietzsche's obvious reference to Machiavelli's conception of *virtù* is important for three reasons.[10] First of all, Machiavelli uses *virtù* not in the sense of "virtue," as opposed to "vice," but in the sense of "skill," "energy," and "determination" (Machiavelli 1988 [1513], 30). *Virtù* is the intellectual capacity that allows Machiavelli's ideal prince, much like Nietzsche's free spirit, to counterbalance the possibly detrimental effects of chance, or *fortuna*: *virtù*, in other words, allows the individual to exist under the conditions of uncertainty that are part of a meaningless world (Machiavelli 1988 [1513], 84–87). As such, Machiavelli's *virtù* is an expression of what Nietzsche views as the will to power. Second, for Machiavelli, as much as for Nietzsche, those human beings who are actually able to realize *virtù* are marked by a "*pathos of distance*," an "aristocraticism of mind" (A 43), which allows them to reflect on the very conditions under which they exist.[11] Third, the historically most famous example of such a "moraline-free" individual is, for Nietzsche, but also for Machiavelli, Cesare Borgia (Dombowsky 2004, 137–39; Detwiler 1990, 51–54). Indeed, the figure of Cesare Borgia underscores what really is at stake in Nietzsche's critique of Christianity as an example of nihilism—an embrace of nihilism as the condition under which it becomes possible to revaluate the life-denying herd morality of Christianity:

> Do people finally understand, do they *want* to understand *what* the Renaissance was? The *revaluation of all Christian values*, an attempt using all means, all instincts, all genius, to allow the *opposite* values, *noble* values to triumph. . . . I see a spectacle so ingenious and at the same time so wonderfully paradoxical that it would have given all the Olympic gods cause for immortal laughter—*Cesare Borgia as Pope*. . . . The old corruption, the *peccatum originale*, Christianity, was *not* sitting on the papal seat anymore! But rather, life! Rather, the triumph of life! (A 61)

Cesare Borgia, in other words, serves as a radical affirmation of life that itself only becomes possible because Christianity has made this triumph possible through its institutions and doctrines. The affirmation of life, then, does not simply overcome nihilism, but Nietzsche fully recognizes that the affirmation of

life requires us to accept the meaninglessness of the world as the condition that allows for the creation of values as manifestations of the will to power.

4

If Nietzsche argues, first, that humanity as an endpoint cannot be overcome and, second, that nihilism is part of the natural history of humanity in a meaningless world, we have to ask whether *The Antichrist*, after all, can really be seen to advocate the overcoming of nihilism. What Nietzsche seems to suggest, rather, is the inevitable self-overcoming of a particular kind of life-denying philosophy that, in its denial of life, actually affirms life. Christianity's denial of life and nature really constitutes a surface phenomenon. Christianity certainly represents "the *corruption* of humanity" that is the consequence of a loss of "instincts" and a preference for "harm" guided by its illusory conviction to really have overcome nature in its attempt to "*devalue* nature and natural values" (A 6 and 38). Morally, this corruption is derived from "*pity*" as "*the* virtue, the foundation and source of all virtues," although pity, as Nietzsche claims, ultimately "makes life *worthy of negation*" (A 7). But the feeling of pity is also a "*practice* of nihilism," and as such a practice it is a kind of human agency and remains a manifestation of the will to power that seeks to overcome the resistance offered by the world in which we live. Pity, for Nietzsche, thus takes on a creative dimension "by *multiplying* misery just as much as by *conserving* everything miserable" (A 7). Ostensibly directed against "pleasure," and presenting the human body as "an object of hatred," Christianity develops a specific "sense of cruelty" aimed against itself as much as against others (A 11 and 21). It is precisely through such acts and practices of negating what exists that Christianity wants to achieve what, from Nietzsche's perspective, cannot be possible, namely a normative standard external to human life and nature that is able to transform the meaninglessness of the world into "the 'meaning' of life" (A 43). This focus on a meaning of life, which itself is not rooted in life but in something outside the life of human beings as natural beings, is the cardinal mistake of Christian moral philosophy and metaphysics:

> When the emphasis of life is put in the "beyond" rather than on life itself—when it is put *on nothingness*—then the emphasis has been completely removed from life. The enormous lie of personal immortality destroys all reason, everything natural in the instincts—everything beneficial and life-enhancing

> in the instincts, everything that guarantees the future, now arouses mistrust. To live *in this way*, so that there is no *point* to life any more, *this* now becomes the "meaning" of life. (A 43)[12]

Christian morality aims at creating meaning in a meaningless world, but what Christianity fails to comprehend is that any such meaning, and any values that guide our agency, cannot be detached from what we already are as human beings. Although it would be all too easy to read the above passage as a critique and rejection of nihilism, the crucial point Nietzsche makes is more complex: the problem is not that Christianity puts the "emphasis of life" on something that does not exist, "*on nothingness*," but Christianity's mistake rests on the fact that it fails to recognize that this really is nothingness, instead conceiving nothingness as something, meaninglessness as meaning, and nothing as being.[13] Christian metaphysics, in other words, has to explain away that something, such as value, can come from nothing, and it achieves this by seeing this nothing as something, that is, God.[14]

Christianity, as Nietzsche presents it in *The Antichrist*, is thus marked by a decisive paradox: in denying the will to power it affirms the will to power, since its denial of life, and of the natural conditions of our existence, can only take place on the grounds of these very conditions. If Nietzsche's demand to translate humanity back into nature, as the central task of his philosophical naturalism, also demands of us to become what we already are, then Christian moral thought and metaphysics become what they really are at the very moment that they enter the stage of nihilism. The metaphysical background assumptions that lead to this paradox, Nietzsche argues, become more apparent in the way in which German idealism—or rather: Nietzsche's polemical version of Kant's transcendental idealism—continues Christianity's life-denying impulse, albeit under more secular conditions.

Despite the neo-Kantian stance that shapes Nietzsche's philosophical naturalism, and despite the proximity of his discussion of nihilism to Fichte and Hegel, Nietzsche's attack on German idealism in *The Antichrist* is mainly an attack on what he regards as illusory metaphysical background commitments that shape Kant's moral philosophy as much as the former members of the "Tübingen seminary," such as Hegel (A 10).[15] The central philosophical problem Nietzsche detects in this context is the assumption of an authentic meaning in a meaningless world, whose authenticity depends on "the concept of a '*true* world,' the concept of morality as the *essence* of the world (the two most vicious errors in existence!)" (A 10). The truthfulness of the true world Nietzsche alludes

to in this passage is, however, not simply a world characterized by the will to truth that he views as a manifestation of the will to power, but it is a world that already entails the assumption of moral authority: the true world is a moral standard, while the will to truth, in its most radical form, is a "moraline-free" skepticism ready to turn against itself. Nevertheless, precisely because "the *lie* of 'the moral world order' runs through the entire development of philosophy, even modern philosophy" (A 26), this lie, and with it the assumption of a true world that Nietzsche so neatly deconstructs in TI, is part of our very own natural history as human beings. It is no accident that Nietzsche, in this passage, uses the word "development," *Entwicklung*, rather than "history," since he regards the history of philosophy here in evolutionary terms. The "high point of humanity" is reached when the true world is gone and "*we got rid of the illusory world along with the true one*" (TI IV), that is, when we, as natural beings, have been able to recognize the potential that comes along with the death of God: the dangerously critical potential of nihilism.

What Christianity and German idealism lack, on the other hand, is an insight into the critical potential of understanding that the world really is, in the sense of GS, utterly meaningless. Instead, the metaphysical turn of German idealism, from Nietzsche's somewhat idiosyncratic point of view, does not merely divide reality into reality and appearance, but it rather presents the phenomenal world as something that is inauthentic, while the noumenal world, the world of being, gains in authenticity precisely because it is withdrawn from reality and thus from knowledge. "Reality was made into 'mere appearance'" and "a complete lie called 'the world of being' was made into reality" (A 10), but the assumed primacy of the world of being depends on those Kantian things-in-themselves about which nothing can be known at all. Not only the world we claim to be reality has been turned into inauthentic appearances, but even the world of being cannot be accessed by human beings.

Kant, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/87), does not, and in fact cannot, make the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves quite as clearly and dramatically as many of his eighteenth- and nineteenth-century readers assumed it to be.[16] His "*transcendental idealism*" allows for a realist account of the world that is closer to Nietzsche's naturalism than Nietzsche himself would be willing to admit: that our knowledge is limited to "appearances" which are "mere representations," and therefore "not . . . things in themselves," does not prevent Kant to "concede the existence of matter without . . . assuming something more than the certainty of representations in me"—after all, these representations and appearances need to come from

somewhere, so that transcendental idealism also entails the perspective of the "empirical realist" (Kant 1998 [1781/1787], 426 [A 369–70]).[17] For Nietzsche, however, dividing the world into inauthentic appearances and an authentic being that escapes human knowledge implied something more radical, as it were: whatever Protestant theology before Kant saw as God, German idealism has now dissolved into the "thing-in-itself" (A 17), but both God and the thing-in-itself really refer to nothing at all. The metaphysical claims of German idealism, on this account, continued the problem that shaped the metaphysical background commitments of Christian theology, without ever fully realizing what was at stake: "God as the deification of nothingness" and "the canonization of the will to nothingness," which neither were recognized as such (A 18).

5

The metaphysical commitments of German idealism, as Nietzsche describes them in *The Antichrist*, have far-reaching consequences for the moral claims made by Christian doctrine and Kantian philosophy. In both cases, our reasons for acting in one way or another are of an external nature, that is, they are external to both our actions and to what we are as natural beings. The morality of pity that Nietzsche attributes to the Christian tradition is ultimately rooted by Christian metaphysics in something that is beyond life, preferably God. Likewise, "Kant as a *moralist*" derives the reasons for acting morally not from these actions, or from our existence as natural beings, but rather from an external normative standard, "'goodness in itself'," which is supposed to be "impersonal and universally valid" and which is thus detached from life (A 11). Nietzsche, in contrast, emphasizes that any normative standard that allows us to create values, and that also allows us to evaluate what is useful for us in one way or another, needs to be internal to us as natural beings who are always engaged in some kind of agency:

> A virtue needs to be our *own* invention, our *own* most personal need and self-defence: on any other sense, a virtue is just dangerous. Whatever is not a condition for life *harms* it: a virtue that comes exclusively from a feeling of respect for the concept of "virtue" [i.e., virtue as such; CJE], as Kant would have it, is harmful. . . . The most basic laws of preservation and growth require the opposite: that everyone should invent his *own* virtues, his *own* categorical imperatives. (A 11)

The crucial point in this passage is not the rejection of Kantian moral philosophy, but rather the way in which Nietzsche does not deny the value of virtue, while emphasizing that the value of virtue as a normative standard for human action has to be derived from what we already are as natural beings. Nietzsche, in other words, opts for a kind of reason internalism.[18] At the same time, it would be a fatal misunderstanding to argue that, for Nietzsche, internal reasons are simply the subjective creations of an individual, and that moral values are thus entirely relative. Rather, if our actions depend on internal reasons that are constitutive of what we are as human beings, these internal reasons will always have emerged within the context of our natural history as a species. They are always more than merely individual reasons.

The reason internalism that comes along with Nietzsche's naturalism, and that also includes what can be described as a form of constitutivism, has two important consequences for his discussion of nihilism in *The Antichrist*. First of all, what separates the free spirits who are able to overcome Christian morality and metaphysics from those who adhere to Christianity is not their radical difference, but it is rather that they are able to have an insight into what they really are: "Let us not underestimate the fact that *we ourselves*, we free spirits, already constitute a 'revaluation of all values,' a *living* declaration of war on and victory over all old concepts of 'true' and 'untrue'" (A 13).[19] The revaluation of all values is lived in the practices and actions of those free spirits, who recognize that their agency is a manifestation of the will to power and thus of life. Second, Christian theology and German idealism might deny the will to power in their rejection of life and nature, but they still cannot escape the will to power, even though their will always destroys the illusions that they live by, since it is "the will to an end, the *nihilistic* will willing power" (A 9).

For Nietzsche, this nihilistic will willing power does indeed have a function within the natural history of human beings, and the ascetic ideal of Christianity remains a manifestation of the will to power. Even though it is certainly misguided, for instance, to derive "humanity from 'spirit,' from 'divinity,'" the very fact that we can do so if it can bring us advantages makes human beings "the strongest animals because they are the most cunning" (A 14). Likewise, in *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche describes the slave revolt that was central to his critique of Christianity in GM (I:10) as an "ingenious" manifestation of power which was able to employ "*the ressentiment* of the masses" as a "weapon" and which was able to use appeals to an otherworldly morality of pity as a "technique for seduction" (A 24, 43, and 44). Moreover, even though Christianity's cultural success very much depends on an "*instinct*

of hatred for reality," the latter is above all an instinct and, as such, represents "*physiological realities*" that make Christianity, as much as German idealism, part of the natural history of humanity (A 30).[20] Indeed, Christianity, despite its complex theological constructs of inwardness, is a kind of "*practice*," a "way of acting," that itself has to be understood as "the result of a single instinct." Seen from this perspective, the actual "reality of 'redemption'" is precisely "*not*" a life-denying faith but the attempt at a "new way of life" (A 33).

Although, throughout *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche often distinguishes between an institutionalized form of Christianity, on the one hand, and the figure of Christ, on the other, the former is still possible only on the grounds of the latter: even behind the church doctrines in the aftermath of St. Paul's institutional founding stands the reality of Christianity as an attempt "to demonstrate how people need to live" (A 35), which the institution of the church eventually implements as an organization of "*power*" through "ideas, doctrines, symbols that would tyrannize the masses and form the herd" (A 42). As such, Christian moral laws, much like Nietzsche's reading of the Kantian categorical imperative, certainly seeks to make the "*natural order*" disappear behind metaphysical doctrines, but it can only be successful in doing so because the exercise of power that comes to the fore in these laws follows this very natural order and its development (A 57). Indeed, Nietzsche suggests that any morality, realistically speaking, is "the expression of the conditions of a people's life and growth" and thus reflects "its most basic instinct of life" (A 25). This must surely also mean that a morality built on a "God who *demands*" still expresses these conditions of life (A 25). If nihilism, then, is the inevitable consequence of Christianity's natural will to truth turning against itself, nihilism itself cannot be detached from life or from the will to power.

Nihilism proper is not unique to Christianity, although we can witness its emergence in particular as soon as Christianity turns against itself. Rather, nihilism is built into any normative order. Since we can neither live in a world without values, nor escape the will to truth as a manifestation of the will to power, nihilism can never fully be overcome. Nietzsche clearly points this out in his late notebooks: "*Nihilism as a normal* condition." But while an "*active nihilism*," as the conscious willingness and practice to engage in revaluation, is an expression of strength and autonomy, a "*passive nihilism*" is merely a manifestation of weakness (LN, 146–47, 9 [35]). Such passive nihilism, as it comes to the fore in Christianity, remains, however, always a surface phenomenon. Behind it stands an active nihilism that is as destructive as it is creative, thus reflecting the tragedy of what it means to be human in a meaningless world: it is precisely because

nihilism is part of life, and precisely because it cannot fully be overcome, that we are able to engage in a continuous revaluation of values. The affirmation of life, then, does not lead to an overcoming of nihilism, as many recent commentators have claimed, but it entails the affirmation of life as tragedy; this, to be sure, requires the affirmation of nihilism.

Notes

1 On the early formation of Nietzsche's conception of nihilism, see Kuhn 1992: 10–18. There has been much speculation about the sources of Nietzsche's somewhat sudden reference to "nihilism" in the summer of 1880. Although he will have encountered the term in a number of contemporary publications, at least in passing, his actual sources seem to be French discussions of Russian literature, such as Prosper Merimée's "Lettre à l'éditeur" in the French edition of Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* (1862). It would be absurd to assume, however, that Nietzsche was entirely unfamiliar with the debate between Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, especially the latter's *Brief an Fichte* (1799). See Ottmann 1999: 329–45, and Kuhn 1992: 18–37.

2 Nietzsche's primary point of reference for Christianity's rejection of physical life, in particular the human body, is Pope Innocent III's treatise *De contemptu mundi* (1195). The latter was available in a nineteenth-century edition (Innocent III 1855), but Nietzsche seems to have relied on the quotations in Plümacher 1884, 66–72.

3 That Christianity should be a particularly poignant example of such *décadence* and degeneration is not surprising. See, for instance, Moore 2002: 139–64.

4 As far as the history of nihilism is concerned, it is important to make a clear distinction between a philosophical nihilism proper and the merely pejorative use of the term. See Emden 2019 (forthcoming).

5 In the background of this claim stands the argument that, for Nietzsche, the normative import of the "will to power" is constitutive of what it means to be a human being as a natural being: if the agency of living things, such as human beings, consists in overcoming resistance, then overcoming resistance is a normative standard constitutive of the agency of living things. For the meta-ethical implications of this argument, see Katsafanas 2013: 145–82.

6 For a preliminary discussion of the emergence of philosophical nihilism around 1800, see Gillespie 1995; Gawoll 1989; Müller-Lauter 1975; Pöggeler 1974.

7 To put it more sharply, the language of inspiration and achievement that has become fashionable in recent American analytic philosophy has little in common with the perfectionism that is the implication of Nietzsche's will to power as

the overcoming of resistance, but it rather seems to reflect a sort of positive psychology that describes even tragic failure as a subcategory of achievement, thus transforming meaninglessness into meaning. See, for instance, Bradford 2015: 171–73. There is, in short, no room for nihilism and tragedy in such accounts.

8 For a fuller version of this argument, see Emden 2016.

9 It is difficult to overlook that Nietzsche's overall perspective shares some central characteristics with Michel Foucault notions of biopower and biopolitics. See the insightful discussion in Lemm 2008.

10 For a balanced and contextual account of Nietzsche's reception of Machiavelli, see Ottmann 1999: 281–92. See also Dombowsky 2004.

11 See also BGE 257 and GM I: 2.

12 On this issue, see also Acampora 2013: 112–22.

13 Although Nietzsche was not aware of this, the logical problem of how being can come from nothing stands at the center of a theological debate in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which, for the very first time, employs the term "nihilism." See Goetze 1733: 77–81.

14 Baumgarten 1779, 3 (§ 7), highlights that this problem is not limited to theology but also is central to the logical underpinnings of metaphysics: there cannot be a *nihil negativum*, since to speak of nothing is already to speak of something.

15 On Nietzsche's Kantian and neo-Kantian commitments, see Doyle 2018: 35–42, 101–41, and 189–206; Emden 2014: 20–33 and 101–24; Hill 2003; Crowell 1999; Anderson 1999.

16 See Prauss 1974. Nevertheless, the dramatic opposition between a phenomenal world of appearances and a noumenal world of things-in-themselves quickly became the standard framework through which to assess the critical project as a whole. See, for instance, the early reviews of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* of 1781 by Christian Garve and Johann Georg Heinrich Feder in the highly influential *Göttingische Anzeigen von den gelehrten Sachen*, in 1782, and the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, in 1783, translated in Sassen 2000: 53–58 and 59–79.

17 See also Kant 1998 [1781/1787], 115 (B xxvi), 171 (A 48), 185 (B 59), and 426 (A 369–70). For a concise reconstruction of the problem that Kant seeks to address with his reference to things-in-themselves, see Allison 2004, 51–57 and 64–73.

18 Nietzsche's claim here goes into a similar direction as Williams 1981, and it is not surprising that Williams, given the naturalistic stance of his account of moral psychology, should have found Nietzsche's position attractive, albeit incomplete. See Williams 2006 and Williams 2002, 12–40.

19 It has to be emphasized that, for the free spirits, this insight depends on the positive function of "science," and the latter's "concepts of cause and effect" are the most serious threat to the power of Christianity, or any other kind of priesthood (A 47 and 49).

20 See also A 39.

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9

Resurgent Nobility and the Problem of False Consciousness

Daniel Conway

1 Introduction

What does Nietzsche mean to accomplish in *The Antichrist*? On the one hand, his aims are fairly clear and oft-repeated: he is determined to disclose for the first time the full truth of Christianity, including "its *real* history [*echte Geschichte*]" (A 39), and to reckon the (prohibitive) costs of allowing it to continue in its accustomed (but no longer warranted) position of cultural and moral authority. In other words, he openly conceives of his project as revelatory, that is, as delivering to its target readership a decisive cognitive upgrade. He thus claims, for example, to have "drawn back the curtain from the *corruption* of humankind" (A 6), an achievement that should position his best readers to appreciate (and perhaps repeat) the "curse" he pronounces on the whole of Christianity.

On the other hand, the cognitive upgrade his best readers may expect to receive is unlike any they have ever known. The clarity to which Nietzsche aspires in *The Antichrist* is advertised as sufficiently compelling that his intended readers will not return to their previous way of life. Having come to see (and understand) the world differently, they also will come to *feel* differently about the world and their placement in it (Owen 2007: 46–49; Janaway 2007: 44–50). In short, they will be changed, and permanently so, by their encounter with the truth Nietzsche reveals. As he explains in *Ecce Homo*, which he intended as a prelude to *The Antichrist*, his "destiny" ordains that he step forward, "in opposition to the lies of millennia," as the truth teller par excellence, as the bearer of a truth that must and will be received as "*terrible*" (EH "destiny" 1). As he indicates in *Ecce Homo*, his best readers may expect to be *reborn* (or rebooted) in their reception of the truth he dispenses in *The Antichrist*.

Our consideration of Nietzsche's dual aims suggests that we are meant to receive *The Antichrist* as a kind of manifesto, wherein the author lays bare a vital truth that has been obscured, distorted, or hidden from view. As with other manifestoes, the reception of this vital truth was intended (and promised) not simply to educate and edify its readers, but also to catalyze in them a permanent transformation, for which Tracy Strong has astutely suggested the term *transfiguration* (2001). Nietzsche's best readers will come to see Christianity as beneath them, as unworthy of their continued allegiance, and as a source of propulsive shame and self-reproach. He thus describes the anticipated publication of *The Antichrist*, in an "agitation edition" no less, as "an event that will very probably split history into two halves" (KSB 8: 482).[1]

An additional (and often neglected) reason to receive *The Antichrist* as a manifesto is its intended role in liberating Nietzsche's best readers from the fog of their as-yet-unacknowledged false consciousness. Whereas Marx and Engels appealed in their more famous manifesto to oppressed workers who had nothing to lose but their chains, Nietzsche appeals in *The Antichrist* to readers who are alienated from the optimal expression of their anti-Christian animus. In both cases, the "chains" in question are understood to designate *internal* constraints, which prevent their unsuspecting captives from fully immersing themselves in the emergent and empowering reality from which they are unwittingly estranged.

This particular focus of Nietzsche's critique of Christianity—namely, its success in producing and sustaining an alienating false consciousness—is a relatively new arrow in an already bulging quiver of complaints. Well established in 1888 as a staunch critic of Christian morality, Nietzsche attempts in *The Antichrist* to address the perplexing phenomenon of an unacknowledged renascence of noble values. In the aftermath of the "death of God," or so he believes, the worthiest of Europeans have already begun to enact the selfishness (*Selbstsucht*) he has long championed as a healthier alternative to Christian selflessness (*Selbstlosigkeit*) (Janaway 2007: 245–52). As he explains to his best readers, for example,

> *We ourselves*, we free spirits, are nothing less than "a revaluation of all values," an *incarnate* [*leibhafte*] declaration of war and triumph over all the ancient conceptions of "true" and "untrue." (A 13)[2]

For the most part, however, this remarkable shift in values has transpired without the recognition, much less the affirmation, of those in whom it has taken place.

While understandably pleased to note the resurgence of nobility in late modern Europe, Nietzsche laments the ongoing alienation of his contemporaries from the noble values they practice but do not preach (A 38).

The genre of the manifesto also suits the indirect rhetorical strategy Nietzsche pursues in *The Antichrist*. Here two points are salient. First, he refrains from directly imparting to his best readers his diagnosis of the cause or source of their current (and as-yet-unacknowledged) enchainment. Instead, he develops a contentious critique of various third parties (e.g., the "statesmen," "prince," "judge," and "patriot" [A 38]), in whom his best readers are meant, if they can, to behold mirror images of their own false consciousness. As we shall see, in fact, it is essential to the envisioned success of *The Antichrist* that his best readers arrive on their own at the crucial realization that will motivate their liberation.

Second, the motivating insight in question is decidedly unappealing to his best readers in their current condition. In order to liberate themselves from their false consciousness, they must come to the (negative) realization that they are not, and never will become, the "anti-Christians" and "free spirits" whom they currently take themselves to be. As we shall see, in fact, the liberation to which they may (and should) aspire will yield only a limited (i.e., historically contextualized) measure of freedom and agency. For them, it will never be the case, as it was (supposedly) for the "invincible order of Assassins," that "everything is permitted" (GM III: 24). Nietzsche's best readers are welcome to "dance in their chains" (BGE 226), and to do so at the expense of the Christian priesthood, but in no event should they expect to lose or escape the historical "chains" that bind them (Franco 2011: 184–87). If they are to overcome their alienation and liberate themselves from their false consciousness, they will need to acknowledge (and affirm) their nonnegotiable standing within the historical sweep of Christianity.

Nietzsche is well aware that his best readers will not arrive happily at this realization. Having asserted themselves as "anti-Christians" and "free spirits," and having been cheered as such by Nietzsche himself, they will be understandably reluctant to accept a lesser role or a demotion in status. If they fail or refuse to arrive at this realization, however, they will be of no use to him in his efforts to "break history in two." If they persist in their false consciousness, in fact, they may cause him to squander the unique historical opportunity that he wishes to share (and exploit) with them. As becomes increasingly clear in his writings from 1888, he is dependent upon them for companionship, assistance, and support. Despite his delusions of grandeur and expressions of chest-thumping bravado, he cannot do this alone.

Still, all is not lost. As self-identified Christians, Nietzsche's best readers may yet attain the optimal, albeit imperfect, freedom and agency that are available to them. As willing agents of the ascendant regime of "Christian truthfulness," he advises, his best readers may yet become what they are—namely, lethal opponents of the fading regime of "Christian morality" (Conway 2015: 243–48). They will do so, he offers, in the event that they join him in declaring "Christian morality" to be untruthful, immoral, and, *therefore*, beneath their recently reclaimed dignity.

2 The "Death of God" and the rise of the Antichrist

In certain respects, Nietzsche may be seen to reprise in *The Antichrist* the rhetorical strategy devised by Zarathustra. After failing in his initial attempts to claim the attention of his unimpressed auditors, Zarathustra resolved to appeal to their "pride," which, he believed, would cause them to recoil from the harrowing prospect of being implicated in the emergence of the "last man" (Z P5).

As we know, this particular strategy did not work well for Zarathustra, in large part because he misjudged his audience and overestimated his authority as the self-appointed teacher of the *Übermensch*. As Zarathustra eventually acknowledged, he was not yet prepared to deliver this particular teaching to the audiences he tended to attract. Plagued by a chronic failure to practice what he preached, habitually unable to reckon the correct "time of day," and allergic to the unflattering feedback he received from his perceptive auditors, Zarathustra was obliged to return to solitude so that he might "become mellow," that is, grow into the role he had prematurely arrogated to himself.

According to Nietzsche, he is bound by no such limitations in *The Antichrist*, the success of which stands or falls on the merits of its (and its author's) various claims to *timeliness* (Shapiro 2016: 102–10).[3] As Nietzsche makes abundantly clear throughout *The Antichrist,* he suffers from none of the self-misunderstandings that doomed the pedagogy of the callow Zarathustra. In *Ecce Homo*, which he hoped would secure for A a sympathetic (or at least curious) audience, he explains that he has become what he is—namely, a "destiny" (*Schicksal*). Having unexpectedly bodied forth the prescribed "revaluation of all values" (EH "Destiny" 1), he now offers to escort his best readers to similar milestones of maturation. In other words, we are meant to take very seriously his authority to execute the particular intervention he stages in *The Antichrist*. According to him, he has earned the prerogative to lift his best

readers out of the false consciousness to which they are captive. But how has he done so? Whence the confidence he exudes in pronouncing a summary "curse" on the whole of Christianity?

The supposed timeliness on display in *The Antichrist* is a product of Nietzsche's evolved understanding of the "meaning" of the "death of God," which is his preferred (and typically misunderstood) designation for the "event" (*Ereigniss*) that defines and contours the late modern condition (GS 343).[4] In opposition to those doomsayers who, like the Madman (GS 125), rush to a hasty and overly negative assessment of their prospects for a post-theistic existence, Nietzsche emphasizes the *opportunities* afforded him and his unknown mates by the death of God (Pippin 2010: 47–51; Conway 2010: 122–30). Notwithstanding the disruptions that are certain to follow in the wake of this catastrophic vacancy of meaning and value, he hails the "clear horizon" and "open sea" that now beckon (GS 343). Although it is possible that things may yet deteriorate and spin out of control, just as the Madman has prophesied, *right now* there is insufficient warrant for the Madman's overwrought and desperate forecast. Nietzsche thus launches *The Antichrist* by revealing his "formula" for the "happiness" that awaits those who have removed themselves from the "gloom" of nihilism: "A Yes, a No, a straight line, a goal" (A 1).

Discombobulated by his own insight into the death of God, the Madman jumped to the conclusion-*cum*-indictment for which he is best known: "*We have killed him*—you and I. All of us are his murderers" (GS 125). Although he is of course mistaken in convicting himself and his contemporaries of the murder of God, his mistake is understandable (Pippin 2010: 49–51). Traumatized by the prospect of navigating a godless cosmos, the Madman ingeniously holds himself responsible for the death of God, thereby ensuring his permanent connection, in the form of guilt, to the dead God. Doing so not only attests, absurdly, to his supposed victory over God, but also absolves him of any share in the responsibility for charting a post-theistic course for the development of humankind. Consigned by his (supposedly) monstrous "deed" to a lifetime of irremediable guilt, he will not join his "cheerful" contemporaries as they explore the "open sea." For the Madman and his lunatic ilk, it is preferable to be known (and convicted) as the murderers of God than to be expected to contribute to the task of deriving meaning from and for a post-theistic epoch (Conway 2010: 122–25). Undone by the prospect of making his way without the guidance of the deity whose panoptic surveillance he resented, he is content to languish in whatever cell or asylum awaits the murderer of God.

What the Madman correctly understands is that our *awareness* of the death of God lags the onset of the "event" itself. The "deed" (*That*) in question—which is, of course, no deed at all, assignable to no doer—is so grand and momentous that it has not yet entered the consciousness of those who are obliged to respond accordingly. Aware that "our ships" remain as yet stranded and unmanned, the Madman doubles down on his jeremiad, warning that the newly "open" sea may remain permanently unexplored. According to Nietzsche, however, the Madman is mistaken to conclude that our lives have not been touched by the death of God. Slowly but surely, and unbeknownst to most of us, the "event" of the death of God has already begun to reshape our habits, practices, and routines. As Nietzsche reveals in *The Antichrist*, in fact, his contemporaries already display a resurgently noble way of life, albeit one from which they remain as yet estranged (A 13, 38). (Even the Madman evinces a quasi-noble sense of prerogative and entitlement, as if he were equal to the "deed" for which he falsely claims credit.) Hence the full "meaning" of the "cheerfulness" to which Nietzsche so proudly attests in GS 343: in the aftermath of the death of God, a life oriented to noble values is not simply possible once again, but possible by virtue of being *actual*, as evidenced by the as-yet-unrecognized exploits of "good Europeans" like Nietzsche and his best readers.

In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche takes it upon himself to address the Madman's central concern: although the heroes whom we need are in fact on the way, their rise has been obscured by our (and their) failure to recognize, much less appreciate, their resurgent nobility. Inasmuch as the "event" of the death of God has not yet entered our consciousness, we continue to evaluate these heroes, along with everyone else, by appealing to the familiar terms and categories of Christian morality. According to Nietzsche, that is, the aforementioned lag between the "event" of the death of God and our awareness of this "event" has been filled in the interim by a compensatory false consciousness. Even as our bodies, habits, and routines are being reconfigured in the wake of the death of God, our consciousness remains centered on our previous relationship to God. As a result, Nietzsche observes, our "words" (or consciousness) and "deeds" (or practices) are currently misaligned: we act and live, increasingly, as if God were dead, but we continue to think and speak about ourselves as if we were still subject to the judgment and approval of this God (A 38).

Thus we see that Nietzsche's chief rhetorical aim in *The Antichrist* is to make his best readers aware of a renunciation that is already underway in their lives. According to him, their deeds already express—and, so, attest to—their resurgent nobility, from which they nevertheless remain estranged. The challenge, then,

is to prompt his readers to assert full, secure, conscious ownership of a truth they already in some sense possess (A 38). Indeed, the story he tells in *The Antichrist* is *their* story, though they have neither recognized nor accepted it as such. What they require at this decisive juncture is not simply an additional insight or a conventional cognitive upgrade, which they conceivably might receive from any critic of Christianity, but an intervention that compels their assent and catalyzes their subsequent transformation. In short, to borrow the Pindarian motto of *Ecce Homo*, they must be helped to *become what they are*, such that their consciousness of themselves reflects (and celebrates) their newly revaluated practices and routines.

What this means for Nietzsche's best readers is that they are not yet the "Hyperboreans," "anti-Christians," and "free spirits" to whom he speaks in *The Antichrist*. As he does in many of his post-Zarathustran books, he favors a *first-person plural presumptive* mode of address: although he engages his best readers as if they were (near) equals, partners in an exclusive "we," they have not yet earned the privilege to be addressed as such. His reliance on this proleptic mode of address is not simply an attempt at flattery, though it certainly is that as well. He speaks to them as his presumptive partners precisely so that they might acquire the momentum and will needed to become what they are. Throughout the text of *The Antichrist*, in fact, he speaks to his best readers not as the selves they currently are, but as the selves they may yet become. In particular, he addresses himself to a "we" that is meant to come into existence and take shape as a consequence of being addressed (and treated) as such.

3 We knowers, strangers to ourselves

Although he nowhere advances a fully developed theory or account of false consciousness, Nietzsche is intimately familiar with the cognitive deficit that besets his best readers. For example, he opens GM with a diagnosis of the very problem that he is determined to tackle once again in *The Antichrist*:

> We are unknown to ourselves, we knowers [*Wir sind uns unbekannt, wir Erkennenden*]—and with good reason. We have never sought ourselves—how could it happen that we should ever *find* ourselves? (GM P1)

As he goes on to explain, this particular cognitive deficit has served humanity well, allowing us (in the collective) to accumulate knowledge untroubled by extraneous

concerns, for example, pertaining to the *value* (for life) of what we do and do not know. Like earnest honeybees, we "knowers" have only ever cared "from the heart" about one thing: "Bringing something home" and storing it in our beehives (GM P1). Remaining "unknown" to ourselves, he thus suggests, has been a necessary and welcome precondition of the accumulation of knowledge by a species that boasts few other sources of comparative advantage. That we "knowers" have remained "strangers" to ourselves has enabled us to survive, adapt, and thrive. We have not sought ourselves, much less found ourselves, precisely because we have never had good reason to do so. Being "unknown to ourselves" thus rounds into view as the opportunity cost, thus far, of being (and surviving as) "knowers" at all.

As Nietzsche cautions in Ecce Homo, in fact, the misdirected imperative to "know oneself" is likely to terminate (or prematurely arrest) the development of individuals who otherwise might grow into "tasks" and "destinies" worthy of their talents. Exaggerating to productive effect, he avers, "To become what one is, one must not have the faintest notion *what* one is" (EH "Clever" 9). Unlike Socrates, that is, Nietzsche does not defend the *general* value or desirability of coming to know oneself. For many or most human beings, he warns, *nosce te ipsum* may in fact be a "recipe for ruin" (EH "clever" 9). At the same time, however, he also believes that his best readers can no longer afford the luxury of this particular cognitive deficit. They must become (better) known to themselves, precisely so that they may complete the "revaluation of values" that is now underway in their lives. Once they have done so, they may join Nietzsche in determining (and willing) a particular future for humankind (A 3).

In GM and the books of 1888, including *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche is increasingly determined to prompt his best readers toward a degree of self-knowledge that he knows to be both disruptive and potentially harmful. He apparently envisions himself as the great awakener, even as he acknowledges the collateral damage he is likely to cause along the way. As he sees it, there is no choice but to urge his best readers to become "knowers" with respect to themselves. (In particular, as we shall see, they must become aware of the extent to which they remain dependent on the authority of Christian morality, even as they pride themselves on constituting an anti-Christian vanguard.) In plotting this intervention, moreover, Nietzsche actually displays the callous disregard that he notoriously claims for himself. Modeling his intervention on the labors of the autumnal harvester, he endeavors to contribute to the grim process of selection that will be required, or so he supposes, to secure a viable future for humankind (A 3). He justifies his dangerous intervention, as we have seen, by

appealing to his keen sense of timing. If he awakens his best readers *now*, at the right time, he (and they) may yet contribute to the renewal of the unified European culture that he sees slipping away.[5]

Nietzsche also presents himself as a product of the *kairos* he is determined to exploit (Shapiro 2016: 102–10). He is the right person to deliver the truth about Christianity because, as he tells us, "[he] was the first to *discover* the truth by being the first to experience lies as lies" (EH "Destiny" 1). As a consequence (or corollary) of this discovery, the "revaluation of all values," which he identifies as his "formula for a supreme self-examination on the part of humanity," has "become flesh and genius in [him]" (EH "Destiny" 1). His words will be received as true—and, so, as compelling—because they bespeak the transformation he already has completed. Having already succeeded in aligning his words with his deeds, he communicates with palpable authority to those who suffer from the misalignment he has corrected in his own life. In sum, he may speak of a "we" that is not yet because he is in a credible position to guide its prospective members toward a (partial) realization of their aspirations to become the "free spirits" they take themselves to be.

Nietzsche's approach in *The Antichrist* thus reflects his more general ambivalence toward the project of European Enlightenment. Notwithstanding his (occasionally shrill) remarks concerning the limits of reason and its most familiar technical applications, he too wishes to enlighten his best readers and to do so for the good of humanity as a whole (as he understands its dubious prospects). He thus redoubles his efforts to expose the truth of Christianity, to reveal the genuine aims and ulterior motives of the priests, to tear away the veils and illusions that have shrouded the aggressively secular objectives of the church, and, *thereby*, to break the spell of Christian morality.

At the same time, however, he concedes that much of what he aims to disclose to his best readers is already known to them (A 38). If he is to exert the desired influence on them, he also will need to disclose their ongoing complicity (and the benefits thereof) in the Christianity they profess to oppose. In other words, they must be made conscious of their failure thus far to mobilize fully the insights they already possess. Unimpressed by the low-hanging fruit plucked by village atheists and other self-satisfied champions of Enlightenment, Nietzsche wishes to expose the source of the lingering attraction of Christianity for those who should (and do) "know better" (A 38).

We might say, then, that Nietzsche is involved in a project of *radical* enlightenment, wherein the penetrating light of reason is trained, finally, on the very cultural institutions—most notably, religion and science—that have

vouchsafed its authority thus far (Owen 2007: 55–59; Franco 2011: 203–16). As Horkheimer and Adorno acknowledged in their own idiom, the project of European Enlightenment finally must be called to account for the shadows *it* casts, even as it sheds welcome light on various institutions and other forms of cultural order. Ideally, as we shall see, this project of intensive self-examination will be reproduced on a personal level in those bold readers whom Nietzsche encourages to tell the truth about their ongoing investments in the Christianity they are pledged to oppose. Just as late modern European culture is obliged, finally, to acknowledge its unscientific faith in the redemptive power of truth (GM III: 27), so the intrepid anti-Christians who propose to lead this effort must interrogate (and eventually mobilize) their nonnegotiable stake in the authority of Christianity itself (Conway 2015: 240–48).

Hence the irony of the emphasis he so heavily lays on the supposedly exquisite timing of the "curse" he dares to pronounce on Christianity. A prepublication casualty of his sudden slide into madness, *The Antichrist* did not appear in print at the appointed time. As a result, the self-avowed harvester failed to arrive on schedule. Finally published in 1895, A saw the light of day a full thirteen years earlier than the book that was supposed to cultivate for it the sympathetic audience that Nietzsche believed it needed. Never having received his plea to "behold the man" responsible for pronouncing a "curse" on Christianity, his best readers may have mistaken him for someone else (EH "Preface" 1). Some may have pronounced him "holy" and hailed him as the founder of a new religion (EH "Destiny" 1). As the new century dawned, neither the author of *The Antichrist* nor the document he intended as its introduction was available to curious and confused readers.

In addition to landing prior to its intended introduction, *The Antichrist* arrived several years later than expected. Did it arrive too late to accomplish its task? Had his best readers become reconciled in the meantime to the "indecent" misalignment of their words and deeds? In light of Nietzsche's own emphasis on the timing of the intervention he intended to stage, it would seem that we must either call into question his knack for determining (and exploiting) the *kairos* or judge *The Antichrist* to be a late-born (and perhaps obsolete) manifesto.

4 Righteous disgust

The decisive transition to be found in *The Antichrist* occurs in Sections 37–39. In the first of these sections, Nietzsche flatters his target readership, including

them in his "we" and addressing them as the "free spirits" they take themselves to be. In Section 38, he lays out the rhetorical challenges he faces in disclosing the truth of Christian morality. According to him, "everyone" already knows what he wishes to convey, which means that he somehow must disrupt the false consciousness that grips his best readers. In Section 39, he promises (and begins to deliver) the genealogical account that is intended to meet the challenges he outlines in the previous section. If *The Antichrist* is to be judged a success on the terms Nietzsche prefers, he must identify correctly the challenges he faces while also providing his best readers with a compelling alternative account of "the *genuine* history of Christianity" (A 39).

Nietzsche begins *The Antichrist* 38 with a "sigh" (*Seufzer*), which not only signals his digression from the main narrative, but also diverts the reader's attention to the suddenly lively (= embodied) expression of his response to the decadence that besets his epoch. Having made his case discursively, he now offers his readers a complementary glimpse, in real time, of how he actually feels about his contemporaries. We already know that they suffer from an unfortunate misalignment of words and deeds; we now learn how this misalignment affects Nietzsche, and how it may yet affect his best readers.

The timing of this digression is also important, for it immediately follows a rousing celebration of the "liberation" achieved by his best readers, who, he crows, have "restored" the venerable contrast between "noble" values and "Christian" values (A 37).[6] Having honored them as the "free spirits" they take themselves to be, Nietzsche turns now to conduct a sober reckoning of the limits of the freedom his best readers have attained thus far. As we have seen, the point of this digression is to inform his best readers, albeit indirectly, of the extent to which they are not yet free from the Christian morality they mean to oppose. As it turns out, in fact, they belong as yet only provisionally to the "we" in which Nietzsche has enrolled them.

Reprising a theme that is well known to readers of his *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche admits his "*contempt for humanity*" (*Menschen-Verachtung)*, which, he now explains, is inflamed by the persistent obtuseness of his contemporaries (A 38). On occasion, he confides, he even "despises [*verachte*] the man of today" (A 38). (His faithful readers will note that *contempt* (*Verachtung*) is the signature, reflexive response of those nobles who find themselves in uncomfortably close proximity to those who are merely and permanently *schlecht* (GM I: 10).) Although he is able to tolerate (with "bleak caution") the madness of bygone epochs, the continuation of this madness into late modernity threatens to exhaust his stores of "*generous* self-restraint" (A 38). Referring obliquely to the

epoch-defining "event" of the death of God, he complains to his best readers that

> our age *knows better*. . . . What used to be just sickness is indecency today—it is indecent to be a Christian these days. *And this is where my disgust* [*Ekel*] *begins*. (A 38)

We thus learn that the liberation celebrated in the previous section is not without its burdens. In Nietzsche's own case, as his best readers now know, the liberation he (presumptively) honors in them has opened him to a potentially dispiriting welter of negative experiences. Although he has freed himself from the toxic influence of Christian morality, he is not free from the indirect effects of its influence on others. To possess the truth about Christianity, in an epoch that stubbornly refuses to acknowledge this truth, *means* that one eventually will be disgusted by one's epoch and contemptuous of one's contemporaries.

Nietzsche's intention here is to prepare his best readers for the bouts of disgust they are likely to endure if they continue along the path he has traveled. If his best readers are like him, they may become distracted or diminished by their feelings of disgust. In that event, they may find themselves in danger of losing heart and hope, which he (and they) cannot allow to happen. Hence the renewed emphasis in this section on the "we" that Nietzsche is determined to build, a "we" to which his best readers as yet belong only provisionally. As is often the case in his post-Zarathustran writings, a disclosure on his part yields an acknowledgment of his vulnerability more generally and of his dependence on the specific "we" he means to cultivate. He *needs* his best readers, and his recognition of this need is integral to his rhetorical aims in *The Antichrist*.

Nietzsche's confession of disgust also links his task in *The Antichrist* to themes that are already familiar to his best readers. In Z, we recall, the central character traces his debilitating "disgust with humankind" to his consideration of (what he takes to be) the negligible differences separating the "greatest" from the "smallest" human beings (Z III: 13.2).[7] In GM, a book in which Nietzsche is similarly concerned to rally his best readers, he also confesses his disgust. Having earlier warned his best readers of the "great disgust" that was "bound to grow out of" the ascetic ideal (GM II: 24), he confirms to them, while calling them his "friends," that "the *great disgust at humankind*" counts (along with "the *great pity for humankind*") as "one of the two worst contagions that may be reserved just for [them]" (GM III: 14; cf. EH "Destiny" 6). The context of this passage in GM also bears noting, for it appears just as Nietzsche is set to reveal his profile of the ascetic priest, whom he proceeds to identify, somewhat

surprisingly, as a kindred agent in the service of life (GM III: 16). As is the case in *The Antichrist*, that is, Nietzsche warns of the threat posed by disgust as he prepares to reveal to his best readers that a presumed opposition on their part in fact betokens an unacknowledged alliance.

But Nietzsche does not simply confess (or report) his past lapses into disgust, as if these experiences were somehow removed from or unrelated to his aims in *The Antichrist*. Upon considering various contemporary types whose "indecency" sickens him, he proceeds to *indulge* his disgust, in real time, working himself into a lather that some readers may find inappropriate or even disturbing. Although it may be the case that "Nietzsche is at his best when he manages to restrain himself," as Kaufmann opines with respect to *The Antichrist* (1982: 567), Nietzsche also may have good reason on occasion *not* to restrain himself, especially if he suspects that his self-restraint may reinforce the false consciousness—and, so, the arrested development—of his best readers.

Gudrun von Tevenar has drawn welcome attention to the distinctly *positive* valence assigned by Nietzsche to those experiences of disgust that may be traced to

> sights and smells of bodily corruption, disease, putrefaction, and similar, to which we tend to react instantly with revulsion, aversion, and loathing, usually accompanied by violent bodily spasms like vomiting, shuddering, or turning away. These entirely instinctive reactions of *Ekel* are positive because they (1) signal danger and (2) protect us by either distancing us from or vehemently ejecting the offending items. (2013: 278–79)

Building on Tevenar's analysis, I wish to claim that Nietzsche's seemingly gratuitous expression of disgust, in excess of his more restrained confession of disgust, is actually central to his overall rhetorical strategy in *The Antichrist*.[8] That is, he is determined not simply to prescribe a therapeutic regimen that involves the expression of righteous disgust, but also to model it to his best readers. As they in turn endure bouts of disgust like those he has confessed to them, they will know (or be reminded) that he already has traveled the path they now tread. In time, his motto may become theirs as well: "Only my sickness brought me to reason" (EH "clever" 2).

Nietzsche's expression of disgust in this section of *The Antichrist* also reinforces his efforts to induce in his readers an experience of bodily transformation. As we have seen, he is not content in this book simply to reveal the truth of Christianity, as if his best readers were simply ignorant or ill informed. He also intends for his disclosure to catalyze in his readers a transformation of

the ways in which they experience (and, so, enact) their ongoing implication in Christian morality. The transformation in question is meant to involve a reorganization of the instincts, a recalibration of the affects, and a reorientation of the body to the mortal rhythms of its earthly existence.[9] As we also have seen, Nietzsche's plan for inducing in his readers the prescribed transformation is to model it to them (Tevenar 2013: 277–79), thereby encouraging them to follow his lead in expressing the disgust they otherwise might only report. Indeed, the uneven tempo of his prose in this section of *The Antichrist*, especially as "his rhetoric gets out of hand" (Kaufmann 1982: 567), is largely attributable to his determination to perform this divided office.

In recommending that his best readers indulge their disgust, Nietzsche also invites them to discover who they really are, independent of who they may think they are. This is possible, or so he believes, inasmuch as expressions of disgust have the effect of temporarily dispersing the fog of false consciousness. When enacted as a fully engaged corporeal response, disgust is revelatory (to oneself and others) of the deepest, most stable stratum of one's character (Tevenar 2013: 278). In this respect, Nietzsche's expression of disgust presents his best readers with a test or measure of their authenticity. If they, too, were to indulge their feelings of disgust, they would be likely to regain access to the noble (or nobility-friendly) stratum of their character, which, Nietzsche suggests, is impervious to the false consciousness produced by Christian morality. If they experience no disgust, or if they decline to express the disgust they experience, then they are not likely to be the readers and companions he seeks. *The Antichrist*, as we know, is by no means a book "for all." Only those who indulge their disgust and, subsequently, convert their disgust into shame, will reveal themselves as Nietzsche's best readers, that is, those who will join him in determining a new direction for the development of humankind (A 3).

5 Revenant virtues

It is no accident that Nietzsche's expression of disgust in this section of *The Antichrist* leads him to invoke—and, so, to name—the virtues that account for his visceral aversion to the misalignments enacted by his contemporaries. Rather than simply rail against the "indecency" of his contemporaries, he fleshes out what he takes to be the signal traits and characteristics of those in whom righteous disgust may become productive. As he does so, he builds a compelling

profile of the *kind* of person whom his best readers should (and perhaps will) wish to become. As this profile rounds into view, the virtues Nietzsche invokes in this section suggest the presence in him of a sturdy bulwark, heretofore neglected, against the machinations of the priests.

It will come as no surprise to Nietzsche's faithful readers that the virtues his disgust prompts him to cite bear a strong family resemblance to the old-fashioned virtues traditionally associated with nobility (Solomon 2003: 147–58). As it turns out, in fact, these old-fashioned virtues have not been extinguished after all, despite the best efforts of the priests and their minions. As the case of Nietzsche is meant to confirm, moreover, these virtues are subject to recall by those among his readers who are willing to indulge their disgust. By expressing his own disgust, Nietzsche thus models to his best readers the therapeutic process of retrieval that allowed him to become, and enables him to remain, what he is. In this respect, the experience of disgust is presented as distinctly positive (if disruptive), but only in the event that his best readers are able to endure its cathartic spasms without losing heart. In (or as a result of) their own expressions of disgust, he believes, they may come into full, secure possession of those virtues that are indicative of their resurgent nobility.

Let us turn, briefly, to consider four of the virtues to which Nietzsche's expression of disgust confirms a renewed allegiance:

Decency (*Anstand*): "What was formerly just sick is today indecent [*unanständig*]—it is indecent to be a Christian today. *And here begins my disgust* [*Ekel*]" (A 38).[10] Nietzsche's implication here is that he would not feel the disgust he expresses if he were not predisposed to the value of decency.[11] Only the (potentially) decent among us would object as he does to the indecency of those who continue to identify (and confess) themselves as Christians. We should bear in mind, moreover, that those whom Nietzsche decries as *indecent* are among the best the late modern epoch has produced, "anti-Christians through and through in their deeds" (A 38).[12] Nevertheless, he is disgusted by the misalignment of their false consciousness with the resurgent nobility they display. In other words, the virtue of decency is closely associated with the aspiration to pursue an appropriate alignment of one's words and deeds (Jaspers 1965: 386–95).

Integrity (or **Rectitude**) (*Rechtschaffenheit*): "If we have even the slightest claim to integrity, we must know today that a theologian, a priest, a pope, not merely is wrong in every sentence he speaks, but *lies*—that he is no longer at liberty to

lie from 'innocence' or 'ignorance.' The priest too knows as well as anyone that there is no longer any 'God'" (A 38).[13] In the aftermath of the death of God, Nietzsche suggests, integrity has emerged once again as a core virtue. Integrity is a virtue possessed (and expressed) by those scholars who not only expose erroneous teachings, but also object to the morality of the priestly types who traffic in prevarications. As such, the virtue of integrity attests to an expectation (and subsequent demand) that the late modern epoch will acknowledge the nonnegotiable reality of its post-theistic setting, in which priestly lies and fables have no place.

Seriousness (*Ernst*): "Seriousness, the profound self-overcoming [*Selbstüberwindung*] of the spirit, no longer *permits* anybody *not* to know this" (A 38). Here Nietzsche indicates what he confirms elsewhere—namely, that the seriousness to which he proudly lays claim is a byproduct of the historical ascendancy of the (science-friendly) regime of "Christian truthfulness" (GM III: 27). Owing to the recent (and improbable) merger of science and religion, seriousness has become a moral virtue. To be serious, he implies, is to see the world not as one wishes or needs to see it, but as modern science demands that it be seen. The only credible way forward, Nietzsche insists, is to understand who we are (and have become) and where we stand. Whether we like it or not, the crescent influence of science, and especially of scientific rigor, obliges us to renounce the lies that are the priest's stock in trade. Here we might note, moreover, that Nietzsche elsewhere presents *seriousness* as productive of *cheerfulness* (*Heiterkeit*) (GM P7), which, we know, characterizes his reception thus far of the death of God (GS 343).

Self-respect (*Achtung vor sich selbst*): "Everybody knows [*weiss*] this, *and yet everything continues as before*. Where has the last feeling of decency and self-respect gone when even our statesmen . . . call themselves Christians today and attend communion?" (A 38). This passage suggests that feelings of decency and self-respect oblige one (and, so, motivate one) to pursue ever more perfect alignments of one's words and deeds. It is this pursuit of alignment that we may associate more generally with the positive value attached to a life of *authenticity* (Solomon 2003: 142–44).

As we know from BGE, Nietzsche regards self-respect—or, as he puts it there, *self-reverence* (*Ehrfurcht vor sich*) (BGE 287)—as perhaps the single most reliable index of a "noble soul."[14] This characterization of self-respect is especially relevant in those epochs, like late modernity, in which the material conditions (and trappings) of nobility have largely disappeared from view. In

the twilight epoch of late modernity, Nietzsche thus suggests, "noble souls" are known only through the alignment of their words and deeds, which may mean that they are known only to one another. (Here we may think of his recently established epistolary friendships with Georg Brandes and August Strindberg.) Although these (noble souls) need not fear material loss or social reproach if they lapse into misalignment, their reverence for themselves prevents them from adopting habits of thought and speech that are inimical to the nobility of their reclaimed way of life.

Several points are worth noting about these virtues. First of all, the virtues named in this section are distinctly *moral* virtues. Or, at any rate, they formerly were recognized as such, before Christian morality claimed the mantle of the one true morality. Challenging this claim, and doing so in the name of "Christian truthfulness," Nietzsche wishes to demonstrate that a rival morality, a *noble* morality, has survived the otherwise totalizing onslaught conducted by the regime of "Christian morality." While it is true that the noble morality is in retreat, unacknowledged even by those whose misaligned exploits it silently directs, it remains alive and (reasonably) well, gathering itself for the sudden and violent upsurge that Nietzsche elsewhere predicts (GM I: 17).

Second, Nietzsche's aim in *The Antichrist* is not to claim (or pretend) to stand *beyond* morality, as he is often understood to mean, but to deliver a moral indictment of the fading regime of "Christian morality." As I have suggested elsewhere, Nietzsche's attack on morality is prosecuted as an internecine affair, with the intent of delivering a moral critique of Christian morality (Conway 2014a: 288–97). In mounting this critique, he appeals to the authority of old-fashioned, noble virtues, especially as these virtues have been reinvigorated of late within the truth-seeking enterprise of modern science. Notwithstanding his various criticisms of contemporary science, that is, Nietzsche regards its animating will to truth as the most reliable vehicle available to him for his campaign to restore the beleaguered noble morality (GM III: 24; GS 344).

Here, too, Nietzsche rests his case on the *timeliness* of the challenge he forwards. In the aftermath of the death of God, the regime of "Christian morality" no longer enjoys the luxury of an unimpeachable claim to cultural authority. Citing the inexorable progress of the "law of life," he explains that the (fading) regime of "Christian morality" is now ripe for displacement by the (ascendant) regime of "Christian truthfulness" (GM III: 27). Although it may be somewhat confusing to speak of issuing a moral challenge to the authority of Christian morality,[15] this is precisely what Nietzsche is up to in *The Antichrist*. He launches his critique and hurls his "curse" from a standpoint beyond (or

outside) the ambit of "Christian morality," but *not* from a standpoint beyond (or outside) morality itself.[16] In doing so, as we have seen, he avails himself of the moral authority resident within the regime of "Christian truthfulness," wherein the virtues of decency, integrity, seriousness, and self-respect are grounded in the pursuit of truth (Conway 2014a: 302–09; Conway 2014b: 202–09). According to him, the discredited regime of "Christian morality" is now known to be immoral, owing primarily to its excessive reliance on the kinds of falsehoods and fabrications that "Christian truthfulness" expressly denounces. In short, Nietzsche's morality, on the strength of which he condemns the immoral regime of "Christian morality," is a historically specific, science-friendly morality, in which the virtues he cites are cultivated, practiced, recognized, and rewarded.

Hence the upshot of Nietzsche's disgust-fueled rant in this section: even in the twilight epoch of late modernity, a noble way of life is viable. Not to be confused with the knightly warriors of old, Nietzsche and his mates are better known by the designation he reserves for them: *Versucher*, intrepid researchers and scholars, daredevils of truth (BGE 42). According to Nietzsche, this is precisely what the times demand. Under the aegis of the regime of "Christian truthfulness," which sponsors their pursuit of the truth, they will attain the greatest expression (and feeling) of freedom that is available to them.

We thus have an answer, the answer we expected all along, to the rhetorical question Nietzsche raised at the conclusion of Essay I of GM: no, this is not the end of "the greatest of all conflicts of ideals," the conflict between the noble morality (or "Rome") and the slave morality (or "Judea"). The "ancient fire" may yet roar once again, perhaps even "much more terribly, after long preparation" than ever before (GM I: 17).

6 Conclusion

Nietzsche is not content simply to encourage his best readers to indulge the disgust aroused in them by the indecency of their misaligned contemporaries. Whereas expressions of disgust may disclose the virtue-laden stratum of one's authentic self, they are not sufficient in their own right to liberate this self and its would-be bearer from the fog of false consciousness. Nietzsche's ultimate objective in *The Antichrist* is to encourage his best readers to redirect their righteous disgust toward *themselves*, in the potentially liberating form and expression of shame.

His point here, apparently, is that simply indulging one's disgust with one's contemporaries is a surefire way of remaining tied to them, as if their shortcomings were required as proof of one's (comparative) claims to nobility. Those who express their disgust with their late modern contemporaries may seize the moral high ground (and congratulate themselves for having done so), but they risk becoming satisfied with this minor victory. For those disgusted parties who become inured to the attendant feelings of (slight) superiority, the experience of disgust may be symptomatic not of their progress toward liberation, but of the persistence (or permanence) of their misalignment, to which they are in danger of resigning themselves. For Nietzsche, the point of indulging one's feelings of disgust is not to secure a minor comparative advantage over insignificant others, especially if one thereby acquires an incentive to persist indefinitely in the enjoyment of this advantage, but to be free of one's contemporaries, to need no longer to compare oneself to them.

This is why the next step, the recommended conversion of disgust into shame, is so important to Nietzsche's rhetorical aims in *The Antichrist*. If he can induce shame in his best readers, or so he believes, he will have advanced them along the path to becoming the "free spirits" they already believe themselves to be.

While shame itself cannot be considered a virtue (much less a revenant virtue), Nietzsche suggests that his best readers are distinguished, potentially, by their capacity to feel shame and to be moved by such feelings to improve themselves (Cavell 1990: 50–57; Conway 1998: 297–306). As he explains, the realization that his best readers remain dependent on a consciousness polluted by Christian morality is likely to occasion in them a potentially liberating shudder of shame:

> Every practice of every moment, every instinct, every valuation that is translated into a *deed* is today anti-Christian: what a *miscarriage of falseness* must modern man be that he is *not ashamed* [*schämt*] to be called a Christian in spite of all this! (A 38)

With this sentence, which concludes the section under consideration, we finally glean the psychological insight that drives Nietzsche's rhetorical strategy in *The Antichrist*. Appealing to a select group of readers in whom he may reasonably expect to arouse feelings of righteous disgust, he reveals the truth of their ongoing (but heretofore unacknowledged) investments in the discredited regime of "Christian morality." Although his best readers take themselves to be opponents of Christian morality, and free spirits to boot, this is not yet the full truth of their existence. While their deeds reflect a principled resistance (and alternative)

to Christian values, their words and thoughts do not. According to Nietzsche, the condition that triggers their disgust, a condition they have acknowledged thus far only in others, is one in which they in fact share. Unbeknownst to them, they too think and speak of their presumed opposition to Christian morality in terms that actually presuppose—and, so, confirm—its continued authority. In short, Nietzsche wishes to reveal to his best readers that they, too, suffer from a disgust-inducing misalignment of words and deeds. The point of this exercise is to encourage them to convert their feelings of disgust, which are typically other-directed, into feelings of shame, which are typically self-directed (Cavell 1990: 46–57; Conway 1998: 301–07).

Although he does not say so explicitly, Nietzsche apparently believes that feelings of shame are potentially liberating only in the event that they arise in response to sincere gestures of self-reproach. Rather than directly humiliate his best readers, which would be relatively simple for him to accomplish, Nietzsche opts instead to prompt his best readers to reproach themselves. As we have seen, he has no trouble shaming those among his contemporaries whom he treats as third parties, precisely because he does not consider them ripe subjects for self-reproach and the liberation it promises. (That they are not the least bit ashamed of their hypocrisy is perhaps sufficient proof of the wisdom of Nietzsche's decision to focus his efforts more selectively.)

If he were to shame his best readers, those who stand to gain from the intensive regimen of self-examination he associates with the "revaluation of all values," he would risk encroaching upon, and perhaps contaminating, the space in which they must decide for themselves that their current lives are as yet unworthy of the nobility to which they aspire. Engaging in direct efforts to shame his best readers would be more likely to stall their development than to contribute to their eventual liberation. The most he can do is to prod them to see themselves in those misaligned third parties—for example, the "judge," the "soldier," and the "patriot" (A 38)—who trigger their righteous disgust.

The intimate relationship between disgust and shame is central to Nietzsche's rhetorical aims in sections 38–39 of *The Antichrist*. If his best readers may be made to feel something like his disgust with his (and their) underperforming contemporaries, thereby proving themselves in the process to be his best readers, they subsequently may be encouraged (or trained) to express their disgust productively, as shame. Motivated by their experience of shame, or so he hopes, his best readers will finally divest themselves of their remaining attachments to the fading regime of "Christian morality." Only in doing so will they become

what they are—namely, the "anti-Christians" whom he addresses (and cajoles) throughout the text of *The Antichrist*.

Notes

1 Translated by Whitlock in Montinari 2003: 109.
2 Nietzsche makes a similar claim about himself in EH "Destiny" 1.
3 On the importance Nietzsche attaches to the timing of his intervention, see Shapiro's contribution to this volume.
4 For an extended analysis of Nietzsche's reference(s) to the "death of God," see Hatab's contribution to this volume.
5 For an illuminating discussion of Nietzsche's reliance on the language and imagery of "accelerationism," see Shapiro's contribution to this volume.
6 Here I follow Sommer 2013: 184–85.
7 My interest in Nietzsche's expression of disgust in this section was piqued by a fascinating lecture presented by Gudrun von Tevenar on the topic of *Ekel* (Southampton 2010). My interpretation here of the positive (i.e., cathartic, clarifying) properties of *Ekel* is both generally and substantially indebted to her lecture.
8 For a summary statement of the case against the productive use or repurposing of disgust, see Nussbaum 2004: 99–107.
9 For an elaboration of the political implications of the transformation Nietzsche means to induce in his best readers, see Strong's contribution to this volume.
10 See Sommer 2013: 187.
11 In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche introduces himself as "the first *decent* human being" (EH "Destiny" 1).
12 See Sommer 2013: 13–14.
13 See Sommer 2013: 71–72. See also the contributions to this volume by Loeb, 93–98; and Shapiro 247–49.
14 As Nietzsche elaborates, "It is not the works, it is the *faith* that is decisive here, that determines the order of rank—to take up again an ancient religious formula in a new and more profound sense: some fundamental certainty that a noble soul has about itself, something that cannot be sought, nor found, nor perhaps lost" (BGE 287).
15 Something like Bernard Williams's distinction between *ethics* and *morality*, which may in fact be of Nietzschean provenance, may be useful here (1985: 174–96). Williams regards *morality* as a "special system" (1985: 174), that is, a wayward, overly theoretical, obligation-freighted offshoot of the more general enterprise of effectively organizing (and husbanding) the precious resources of ethical life. Like Nietzsche, Williams urges his readers to reject the unrealizable demands

of morality in favor of a more traditional, if less distinct, approach to ethics. Like Nietzsche, that is, Williams seeks to displace a monistic (or monopolistic) approach to ethical life with a pluralistic appreciation for many, equally valuable approaches to the organization of ethical life.

16 For a complementary account of the virtues associated with the project of revaluation, see Owen's contribution to this volume. For a cogent theoretical defense of the morality to which Nietzsche appeals in *The Antichrist*, see Katsafanas 2018: 85–96.

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10

Deconstructing the Human: Ludwig Binswanger on *Homo Natura* in Nietzsche and Freud

Vanessa Lemm

1 Introduction

In aphorism 14 of *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche announces that he has "changed" (*umgelernt*) his way of thinking about human nature and that he has "placed the human being back among (*zurückgestellt*) the animals" (A 14).[1] In recent scholarship, Nietzsche's views on human nature in *The Antichrist* 14 have been read as evidence of his adherence to a naturalistic conception of human nature that is Darwinist and largely inspired by the life sciences of the nineteenth century.[2] In this chapter, I draw on Ludwig Binswanger's consideration of human nature as *homo natura* in Nietzsche and Freud. I will offer a reading of *The Antichrist* 14 that shows why Nietzsche's (and also Freud's) project of the re-naturalization of the human being does not reflect a conception of human nature that begins and ends with the natural-scientific view of nature. My thesis is that Nietzsche and Freud employ natural science to deconstruct the civilizational ideal of humanity as superior to animals and plants. Both Nietzsche and Freud, however, set aside natural science when it comes to reconstructing human nature from its place among animals and plants because natural science is unable to account for human cultural productivity.

Binswanger acknowledges that both Nietzsche and Freud adopt the viewpoint of the natural sciences in their respective investigations of human nature: Freud's *homo natura* is a "truly natural scientific, biological-psychological idea" (Binswanger 1947: 166).[3] However, he also maintains that they do so to deconstruct the metaphysical, moral, and religious conceptions of human

nature. Thus the viewpoint of the natural sciences is adopted for strategic reasons and not as an end in itself.[4] Binswanger insists on Nietzsche's and Freud's relentless efforts to dismantle the vanity and hypocrisy of the human being by uncovering *homo natura* beneath the civilizational constructs of *homo cultura* (Binswanger 1947: 161). For Binswanger, Nietzsche's and Freud's critiques of civilization are one of the key achievements and merits of their naturalism. As I will demonstrate in the first part of this chapter, the scientific deconstruction of the human as it is deployed in Nietzsche's critique of civilization is what I take to be at stake in aphorism *The Antichrist* 14.

Although Binswanger insists on the scientific nature of Freud's and Nietzsche's approaches to the question of the human being, he is careful not to fall back into naturalistic and scientistic conceptions of human nature that treat the human being as an object of nature. When Binswanger insists that Freud's approach to human nature needs to be understood in strictly scientistic terms, reflecting the perspective of the natural scientist, or when Nietzsche invokes the "discipline of science" (*Zucht der Wissenschaft*) in BGE 230 as the privileged vantage point of an investigation of human nature, this does not mean that Nietzsche and Freud are advancing some kind of "anthropological absolutism."[5] It is not rooted in the "truth" of the natural sciences, as if one could explain how and why a certain type of person comes to bear certain values and ideas just as "one might come to understand things about a certain type of tree by knowing its fruits" (Leiter 2002: 10).[6] For Binswanger, Nietzsche and Freud instead investigate the "inner history of life" (*innere Lebensgeschichte*), the history of the human being's embodied existence, and not the "functionality" (*Lebensfunktionen*) of the empirical body (Binswanger 1947: 167). According to Binswanger, Nietzsche's and Freud's anthropologies are inspired by the discovery of the human being's bodiliness (*Leiblichkeit*) and vitality (*Vitalität*) as a living being (Binswanger 1947: 168). Nietzsche and Freud embrace Darwin's revolution in biology insofar as they accept that an investigation of human nature needs to begin with the acceptance that the human being is an "animal" (*animalische Kreatur*) (Binswanger 1947: 184).[7] However, Binswanger is careful to distance Nietzsche's and Freud's considerations of the human being's bodiliness and vitality from scientistic and reductionist naturalism. For Nietzsche and Freud, the human body is situated within the horizon of the human being's (self)-experience as a living being. This is an important aspect of Binswanger's understanding of human nature in Nietzsche and Freud that he shares with Löwith, who interprets Nietzsche's philosophy as a philosophical anthropology (1933: 43–66).[8] Both Löwith and

Binswanger identify a naturalism in Nietzsche and in Freud that is centered on the question of the human being and its (self)-experience as a meaning (Löwith) and culture (Binswanger) creating living being. As I will demonstrate in the second part of this chapter, the philosophical idea of the body is an aspect of Nietzsche's and Freud's naturalism that is not captured by reductionist and scientistic accounts of *homo natura*.

For Nietzsche and Freud, the use of natural science is not sufficient to re-naturalize the human being because for them the question of the human being's capacity for knowledge (*Erkenntnisfähigkeit*) is not exhaustive of human nature, as it is the case in neo-Kantian epistemology. On this point Binswanger would disagree with Leiter, who argues that with *homo natura* "Nietzsche wants to establish a proper starting point for knowledge" (1992: 279). On Binswanger's account, Nietzsche and Freud are primarily concerned with the human being's capacity for culture: "For Freud the basic question (*Grundfrage*) is how far the cultural capacity of the human being extends" (Binswanger 1947: 163). Thus, for Binswanger, the rigorous, scientific deconstruction of human nature and the importance both Nietzsche and Freud ascribe to an investigation of the human body are not the only distinguishing features of Nietzsche's and Freud's *homo natura*. Binswanger explains that the deconstruction of the human is not the end point of Freud's and Nietzsche's critiques of civilization. Rather, it prepares what they both refer to as the recovery of the naturalness of the human being. In Nietzsche's terms, this is the "re-naturalization" (*Vernatürlichung*) of the human being (GS 109; KSA 9:11[211]). Re-naturalization is at the heart of Nietzsche's and Freud's larger projects of cultural renewal. It would therefore be false to assume that the end product of the natural-scientific deconstruction of human nature already encapsulates Nietzsche's conception of the naturalness of the human being as naturalist readings seem to suggest.

Re-naturalization in Nietzsche and Freud is diametrically opposed to the "humanization" (*Vermenschlichung*) of the human being associated with the project of civilization (BGE 242).[9] Addressing the question of re-naturalization relies on a theory of cultural productivity that exceeds the limits of scientific deconstruction and requires an interpretative, historical-philosophical reconstruction of human nature, which I discuss in the third part of this chapter. The challenge of such a reconstruction is not only to provide an understanding of who we are as human beings, but, more importantly, to offer a vision of who else we might become. Binswanger draws on Nietzsche's idea of the over-human to illustrate this idea of human becoming that he finds absent in Freud.

In contrast to Binswanger, I argue in the final part of this chapter that he does not sufficiently appreciate the ancient Greek influence on both Freud's and Nietzsche's thinking about human nature. In particular, Binswanger seems to be overly critical of Freud's theory of the drives, which he wishes to complement with a philosophical idea of metamorphosis, as exemplified in Nietzsche's thinking about the *Übermensch*. Instead, I argue that Nietzsche and Freud rely on archaic conceptions of nature, as chaos, according to which nature is a creative and artistic resource of transfiguration and transformation that cannot be fully captured by the discourses of the natural sciences (Granier 1977: 135–41; Granier 1981: 88–102). On my hypothesis, *homo natura* in Nietzsche and Freud always already reflects an understanding of human nature that is engaged in cultural (self)-transformation and, as such, overcomes the dichotomy between culture and nature. Both Nietzsche and Freud advocate for a recovery of the human being's natural drives to overcome false conceptions of the human being produced by civilization toward the cultivation of a more natural and genuine humanity.

2 Deconstructing the human through natural science (*The Antichrist* 14)

In his commemorative speech to celebrate Freud's eightieth birthday, Binswanger uses Nietzsche's coinage *homo natura* to shed light on Freud's conception of human nature. Binswanger distinguishes between two different and consecutive steps in Freud's investigation of human nature: first, a rigorous-scientific deconstruction of human nature; and second, a creative-interpretative reconstruction of human nature. Whereas the first is an element of Freud's critique of civilization, the second belongs to his larger project of cultural renewal.

Binswanger understands *homo natura* in Freud as the scientific idea of "the human being as nature, as a natural creature" (*als Natur, als natürliches Geschöpf*) (1947: 159).[10] He remarks that Freud was the first to formulate a truly scientific theory of the human psyche analogous to a mathematical function of the soul.[11] The scientific method is employed by Freud for a deconstructive purpose:

> Nowhere is the *destruction* (*Destruktion*) of the human being more rigorous and thorough as in the natural science. Also the natural-scientific idea of "*homo natura*" must *deconstruct* (*destruieren*) the human being as a being that lives within a multiplicity of meaning direction (*in den mannigfachsten Bedeutungsrichtungen lebendes*) and that can only be understood out of this

> multiplicity of meaning directions. The natural-scientific dialectic must be applied to the human being until there remains only the product of tabula rasa, the dialectical product of reduction and everything that constitutes the human being as human and not only as an animal creature is extinguished. This must be and actually is the starting point for anyone who "deals" (*umgeht*) with the human being in practice or in science. (Binswanger 1947: 184, emphasis added)

Binswanger adds in a footnote that Nietzsche followed exactly the same method. When Nietzsche and Freud reduce the human being to its animal nature, this should not be misunderstood as some kind of scientistic reductionism. Rather, the objective of deconstruction is to reveal that everything else we find in life, namely, sense (*Sinn*) and meaning (*Bedeutung*), are fiction (*Erdichtung*), illusions, consolation, and "beautiful appearance" (*schöner Schein*) (Binswanger 1947: 185). For Binswanger, Nietzsche and Freud follow the method of the natural sciences by reducing the human being to a happening that "bears meaning (*sinn-bares Geschehen*), to a being lived and overwhelmed (*ein Gelebt- und Übermächtigwerden*) by blind driving forces (*treibenden blinden Machten*)" (Binswanger 1947: 185). Binswanger explains that the point of their "destructive-constructive method" (*destructive-konstruktive Weise*) is not "to expose in an absolute sense the belief in meaning (*Sinnglaube*) as something that pertains to humanity (*Menschheit*) or to being human (*Menschsein als Ganzes*)" (Binswanger 1947: 185), for that would be inherently nihilistic.[12] Instead, the great genius of Nietzsche and Freud was to unveil the hypocrisy of certain individuals, groups, and cultural epochs and not of humanity as a whole. A reading of *The Antichrist* 14 will illustrate how Nietzsche employs the viewpoint of the natural sciences to unveil a series of errors in the dominant conceptions of the human being found in the history of Western civilization.

The Antichrist 14 begins with the following statement:

> We have learned better (*umgelernt*). We have become more modest in every respect. We no longer trace the origin of the human being in the "spirit," in the "divinity," we have placed him back among (*zurückgestellt*) the animals.

In the literature, *The Antichrist* 14 and BGE 230 are often cited together as evidence for Nietzsche's naturalism. Although both aphorisms put forward an argument for naturalism, they offer two quite different treatments of the question of human nature. The "We" implied in *The Antichrist* 14 has gone through a process of transformation. In contrast to Nietzsche's free spirits in BGE 230, the group alluded to as "We" in *The Antichrist* 14 are no longer stupefied before the "terrible (*schreckliche*) basic text of *homo natura*" as in BGE 230. Rather,

they have already become masters over "the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled and painted over that eternal basic text *homo natura*" (BGE 230). The "We" alluded to in *The Antichrist* 14 refers to the type of philosophers who have undergone the "discipline of science" (*Zucht der Wissenschaft*) and are "deaf to the siren songs of the old metaphysical bird catchers who have been piping at him all too long: 'You are more! You are higher! You are of a different origin!'" (BGE 230). They can say with confidence that the human being is not "the great secret objective of animal evolution" and "absolutely not the crown of creation" and that all creatures of nature are "stand beside him [the human being] at the same stage of perfection" (A 14). As such, they have a "newly discovered, newly redeemed nature" (GS 109): for them nature is eternal and complete.[13]

The Antichrist 14 accomplishes this learning process and transformed perspective on human nature by systematically placing the human being back among the animals; as such, it illustrates Binswanger's account of the rigorous-scientific deconstruction of the human. By contrast, BGE 230 can be read as an interpretative historical-philosophical reconstruction of human nature that is comparable to the one Binswanger discovers in Freud. Whereas *The Antichrist* 14 enacts a "tabula rasa" to reach the end product of a systematic deconstruction, Nietzsche's treatment of the naturalness of the human being in BGE 230 is future oriented and presents re-naturalization as the open task of retranslating and replanting the human being back into nature. BGE 230 ends in an *aporia* on the question of the value of truth and hints at the transformative power of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*). As such, BGE 230 has the features of what Binswanger refers to as the reconstruction of the naturalness of the human being in Freud.

In *The Antichrist* 14, Nietzsche does not adopt a forward-looking perspective that asks itself what else the human being could become by recovering the transformative power of nature. Instead, it adopts a backward-looking perspective on what the human being is and has been—namely, an animal among other animals. The opening passage of *The Antichrist* 14 confirms this point:

> We consider him the strongest animal because he is the most cunning: his spirituality is a consequence of this. On the other hand we guard ourselves against a vanity which would like to find expression even here: the vanity that the human being is the great secret objective of animal evolution. The human being is absolutely not the crown of creation, every creature stands beside him at the same stage of perfection. . . . And even in asserting that, we assert too much: the human being is, relatively speaking, the most unsuccessful (*missrathenste*) animal, the sickliest, the one most dangerously strayed from its instincts—with all that to be sure, the most interesting!

According to *The Antichrist* 14, the human being is distinct from other animals through its cunning and trickery, attributes that are symptomatic of the human being's vanity, which is an ongoing theme in Nietzsche and Freud.[14] Nietzsche and Freud both diagnose an increasing sickness of the human being and agree that human civilization has produced "the most unsuccessful (*missrathenste*) animal, the sickliest, the one most dangerously strayed from its instincts"(A 14). In response to their evaluation, they prescribe the healing effect of re-naturalization. They seek to recover the human being's natural health by means of philosophy's art of transfiguration (Nietzsche) and psychoanalysis' art of therapeutic transformation (Freud). Their aim is to initiate a renewal of culture by cultivating a more natural and genuine humanity.

But the re-naturalization of the human being is not the topic of *The Antichrist* 14. Once sickness has been established as the distinguishing feature of the human animal, the aphorism proceeds to the actual deconstruction of the human. *The Antichrist* 14 adopts the perspective of the past by recounting how our metaphysical, moral, and religious conceptions of human nature need to be reconsidered following the rigorous application of insights derived from the natural sciences, including physics (mechanics), psychology, and physiology. As such, the overall tone of *The Antichrist* 14 is misanthropic, concluding with the sobering "dialectical product of scientific reduction," the "mortal frame" (*sterbliche Hülle*) of the human being (A 14) (Binswanger 1947: 184). To reach this goal, Nietzsche takes his readers through the great errors in the history of philosophy, from Descartes to Hegel, revealing that at the heart of their anthropologies stand misconceptions of human nature. As such, *The Antichrist* 14 also accomplishes a "de-humanization" (*Entmenschlichung*) of nature.[15]

Nietzsche begins by inverting Descartes's philosophical method, which consists of rigorously doubting one's beliefs, ideas, thoughts, and sensory experience in pursuit of the purity and veracity of spirit in the form of the human *cogito* (Kofman 1979: 198–224). Nietzsche instead follows the logic of physiological proofs to take sides for and against Descartes:

> As regards the animals, Descartes was the first who, with boldness worthy of respect, ventured to think of the animal as a *machine*: our whole science of physiology is devoted to proving this proposition. Nor, logically, do we exclude the human being, as even Descartes did: our knowledge of the human being today is real knowledge precisely to the extent that it is knowledge of him as a *machine.* (A 14)

Nietzsche embraces Descartes's thesis that the animal (and hence also the human body) is a machine. He does so, however, only (and subsequently) to subvert it

by confirming that like the animals, the human being is a machine: "our whole science of physiology is devoted to proving this proposition" (A 14). Nietzsche's subversion of Descartes is a double reversal. First, he reverses Descartes's understanding of the human being as distinct from the animal by claiming that from the point of view of physiology, there is no difference between animals and humans; and second, he subverts Descartes's understanding of the body as inferior to the mind by reevaluating the status of the human spirit by claiming that it is only an (inferior) aspect of the body.

The second step in placing the human being back among the animals concerns the belief in the "free will," the *liber arbitrium*, as the distinguishing feature of human nature:

> Formerly the human being was presented with "free will" as a dowry from a higher order: today we have taken even will away from him, in the sense that will may no longer be understood as a faculty. The old word "will" designates only a resultant, a kind of individual reaction which necessarily follows a host of partly contradictory, partly congruous stimuli—the will no longer "effects" anything, no longer "moves" anything. (A 14)

This time Nietzsche employs the insights drawn from psychology against the errors in moral conceptions of the nature of the human being. Psychology shows that what we formerly called "free will" is in fact a multiplicity of drives and instincts that are irreducible to one another and lie at the basis of our so-called actions. When one adopts the viewpoint of the natural scientists who "stand before the human being as they stand before other (*anderer*) nature" (BGE 230), one realizes that humans are like animals and plants: they lack the freedom to act at will. Actions should therefore not be thought of as willed or as conscious (TI "Errors" 7). This insight leads to the idea that the Christian doctrine of the free will "has been invented essentially for the purpose of punishment, that is, of *finding guilty*" (TI "Errors" 7). Nietzsche insists that it is only because "the human being *regards* itself as free, not because it is free, that it feels remorse and pangs of conscience" (HH 39). Against this doctrine, Nietzsche puts forward the idea that "everything is innocence" (HH 107 and TI "Errors" 8). The point of Nietzsche's critique of the Christian doctrine of "free will" is that its corresponding idea of moral responsibility fails to generate genuine responsibility. Instead the human being needs to recover its animal innocence to recognize in an "action compelled (*zwingt*) by the instinct of life" and carried out with "joy" (*Lust*) the "right (*rechte*) action" (*Tat*) (A 11). Freud would confirm and complement Nietzsche's insights into the "pleasure principle" with a theory

of the drives which demonstrates that the will, or the Ego, is no longer "the master of his household" (*der Herr im Haus*), as Freud says (Binswanger 1947: 188). A note from Nietzsche's *Nachlass* summarizes this point:

> The act of free will would be a miracle, a break in the chain of nature. The human beings would be miracle workers. The consciousness of a motive comes with an illusion—the intellect, the primordial (*uranfängliche*) and only liar. (KSA 8:42[3], my translation)

By placing the human being back among the animals and plants, Nietzsche closes the gap in the chain of nature and reestablishes the truth of nature: "The intellect, the primordial (*uranfängliche*) and only liar" (KSA 8:42[3]).

The third and last step in Nietzsche's scientific reduction of the human being to the animal concerns the idea of the purity of the spirit. In contrast to the view that spirit is the sign of human distinction and elevation, Nietzsche employs the knowledge produced by modern biology to reveal that the spirit is nothing but "pure stupidity"[16]:

> Formerly one saw in man's consciousness, in his "spirit," the proof of his higher origin, his divinity; to make himself perfect, the human being was advised to draw his sense back into himself in the manner of the tortoise, to cease to have any traffic with the earthly, to lay aside his mortal frame: then the chief part of him would remain behind, "pure spirit." We thought better of this too: becoming-conscious, "spirit," is to us precisely a symptom of a relative imperfection of the organism, as an attempting, fumbling, blundering as a toiling in which an unnecessarily large amount of nervous energy is expended—we deny that anything can be made perfect so long as it is still conscious. "Pure spirit" is pure stupidity: if we deduct the nervous system and the senses, the "mortal frame," we miscalculate—that is all! (A 14)

The inferiority of the conscious over the unconscious is another common *topos* in Nietzschean and Freudian psychology. In GS, for example, Nietzsche maintains that contrary to the belief that consciousness denotes the human being's superiority with respect to other forms of life, consciousness in the human animal is a relatively young, insufficiently developed organ, which, as such, can even be dangerous (GS 11, 354). Nietzsche reestablishes the value of the unconscious by reminding us that most of the human animal's vital functions operate without consciousness and that it is thanks to their unconsciousness rather than their consciousness that the human animal has so far preserved itself. Freud's theory of the unconscious will confirm this intuition in Nietzsche.

Despite Nietzsche's and Freud's sobering accounts of human consciousness as a secondary phenomenon in the life of the human psyche, neither of them simply gives up on consciousness all together. As Binswanger points out, this would be a huge misunderstanding. Once Nietzsche and Freud have reached the "dialectical product of scientific reduction" (Binswanger 1947: 184)—the "mortal frame" of the human being (A 14)—the question becomes whether one can plant a different kind of consciousness that embraces the bodily (animal and plant) dimensions of human life as the growing ground of a natural humanity. This question leads Nietzsche and Freud to an investigation of the human being's bodiliness (*Leiblichkeit*) and vitality (*Vitalität*) as a living being (Binswanger 1947: 168).

3 *Leiblichkeit* (bodiliness) in Nietzsche and Freud

Binswanger notes that the importance both Nietzsche and Freud ascribe to an investigation of the body is a distinguishing feature of their conception of human nature. In particular, it sets their idea of *homo natura* apart from the romantic notion of a return to nature:

> Whereas the Roussouian idea of *homo natura* is a cheering utopia of the angelical nature of the human being born from a benevolent nature, a *homo natura benignus et mirabilis* so to speak, the idea of *homo natura* in Novalis arises from a magic idealisation of bodiliness and a magic naturalisation of spirit, the *homo natura* in Nietzsche and Klages is based on the same idea as in Freud: here bodiliness (*Leiblichkeit*) determines what the human being is in its essence. (Binswanger 1947: 168)[17]

Nietzsche's recommendation to follow the "guiding-thread of the body" (*Leitfaden des Leibes*) "in all matters of scientific inquiry" (KSA 11:26[432]), especially those related to the spirit (KSA 11:26[374], see also KSA 12:2[91]) confirms Binswanger's observation. A posthumous note thematizes this new perspective in philosophy:

> If we assume that the "soul" was an attractive and mysterious thought, a thought which philosophers rightfully only gave up reluctantly—maybe what they have learned to receive in exchange for the "soul" is something even more attractive, even more mysterious: the human body. The human body, in which the whole far and recent past of all organic becoming is again alive and corporal, through, above and beyond which a tremendous unheard stream seems to flow: the body is a much more remarkable thought than the old "soul." (KSA 11:36[35])[18]

There are three points I wish to make in regards to the body opening up a new perspective in philosophy. First, the above note illustrates that what fascinates Nietzsche (and I would add Freud) is not the empirical but the philosophical idea of the body: "the body is a much more remarkable thought than the old 'soul'" (KSA 11:36[35]). The key for Nietzsche is not only to understand that in the human body "the whole far and recent past of all organic becoming is again alive and corporal" (KSA 11:36[35]) but also that "the whole pre-history and past of all sentient being, continues within me [Nietzsche] to fabulate, to love, to hate, and to infer" (GS 54). Although Nietzsche acknowledges that the natural sciences are making an important contribution to an enhanced understanding of human nature, neither the insights they provide nor the methods they follow will answer the question of human nature. Rather, the task of explaining how "the whole far and recent past of all organic becoming is again alive and corporal" (KSA 11:36[35]) in the human being may require a contribution of the natural sciences. Grasping how "the whole pre-history and past of all sentient being, continues within me [Nietzsche] to fabulate, to love, to hate, and to infer" (GS 54) surely relies on the imagination of the philosopher and poet who has ears for the "tremendous unheard stream" that flows "through, above and beyond" the human body (KSA 11:36[35]). Nietzsche views the person like a natural organism but the whole life of this natural organism cannot be made intelligible through the discourses of the natural sciences. Naturalistic and reductionist accounts of the human body in Nietzsche miss this difference between the empirical body and the living body as a "marvellous bringing together of the most multiple life" (KSA 11:37[4]) and therefore provide only a one-sided conception of human nature in Nietzsche.

Second, both Nietzsche and Freud are well aware of the limits of their endeavors into human nature. Freud, for example, describes his attempts to capture human nature through a theory of the drives intended to grasp the meaning and origin of the human being's psychic life and its link with the "archaic ground of all life" (*Urgrund allen Lebens*) as a confronting, discomforting, and uncanny experience which led him to acknowledge the mythological nature of his own scientific endeavors (Binswanger 1947: 160):

> The theory of the drives is, so to say, our mythology. Drives are mythical entities, magnificent in their indefiniteness. In our work we cannot for a moment disregard them, yet we are never sure that we are seeing them clearly. (Freud 1933: 95)[19]

Freud's "apprehensive astonishment, his shivering before the 'uncanny (*ungeheuren*) invisibility'" of the drives, attests to the impossibility of discerning with certainty the truth of human nature (Binswanger 1947: 160). For Freud, the endeavors of the natural scientist are therefore inherently tragic in kind. There is no consolation before the violent force of nature and its immanent death; Freud thus concludes that it must be the destiny of the human being to bear the suffering and pain inflicted by nature as "the first duty of all living beings":

> The unremitting astonishment of the natural scientist before the seriousness and power of life and its immanent death, the astonishment before a life, of which Freud [and I would add Nietzsche] believed that it "causes our suffering (*wir all schwer leiden*)" (XI, 464), for which there exists no compensation (ibid.) and no consolation, a life that we all have to bear as the "first duty of all living beings." (X, 345 f.) (Binswanger 1947: 160)[20]

Freud's tragic vision of life and his acknowledgment of the limits of human knowledge are echoed in Nietzsche's philosophy. The impossibility of drawing a line of distinction between knowledge and mythology is an ongoing theme in Nietzsche's work. Nietzsche draws the image of the human being as unaware of its being attached to the back of a tiger and claims that nature threw away the key to the mishmash of physiological activity in the body (TL). Nature manifests itself in and through the body as a wild, untamed, and uncontrollable force that is indeterminate and inaccessible to human consciousness. This insight no doubt complicates Nietzsche and Freud's question of how to cultivate a different kind of consciousness that embraces the bodily (animal and plant) dimensions of human life as the growing ground of a natural humanity.

The final point I wish to make in regard to Nietzsche's and Freud's investigation of the human being as an embodied and living being is that this investigation is oriented toward an overcoming of the human. As Bertino and Stegmaier have correctly pointed out, Nietzsche's (and I would add Freud's) anthropology is always also a critique of anthropology (2015: 65–80). Nietzsche and Freud rely on the discoveries of their contemporaries in the natural sciences to show that the human being is neither a rational nor a moral creature. Their underlying motivation is to overthrow dominant conceptions of the human being that can no longer be upheld as a result of scientific discoveries. A note from Nietzsche's *Nachlass* on the development of organic life illustrates this idea:

> Perhaps the whole development of the spirit concerns the body (*Leib*): it is the history of the formation of a higher body (*Leib*) that is becoming perceptible. The organic is ascending towards higher stages. Our craving for knowledge of

> nature is a means through which the body (*Leib*) strives to perfect itself. Or rather: hundreds of thousands of experiments in nutrition, dwelling and ways of living are to transform the body (*Leibes*): consciousness and valuation, all kinds of desires and lacks of enthusiasm are symptoms of these changes and experiments in the body. In the end it is not about the human being: it is about its overcoming. (KSA 10:24[17])

Furthermore, the above note shows that against the backdrop of the development of organic life, human nature is not something that is absolute, stable, and fixed. Rather, human nature is involved in the continuous formations and transformations of nature. From the perspective of the historical development of organic life, culture is not the distinguishing feature of the human being. Instead culture is always already immanent to nature. For Nietzsche and Freud, answering the question of how to plant a different kind of consciousness, which embraces the bodily dimensions of human life as the growing ground of a natural humanity, means to affirm nature as a creative and artistic force.[21] It requires an overcoming not of what the human being is, a natural creature, but of what it has become in the process of its civilization. Again, how such a (self)-overcoming of the human can be conceived is a question that exceeds the limits of the natural sciences and requires a philosophical imaginary to provide an account of culture that does not transcend nature. This is what I take to be the purpose of Nietzsche's and Freud's reconstruction of human nature on the basis of a "de-deified" nature (GS 109), a "newly discovered, newly redeemed nature" (GS 109).[22]

4 Reconstructing human naturalness

The argument has been made that BGE 230 reflects a "natural history of the free spirit," which provides an account of the nature of the human being as *homo natura* (Brusotti 2013, 259–78; Brusotti 2011, 59–91). In this aphorism, Nietzsche explains the emergence of culture (and knowledge) from what he refers to as the "basic will of the spirit" (BGE 230) and adds that this "basic will" (*Grundwille*) pertains to all living beings. Commentators have noted that this "basic will of the spirit" has all the features of what Nietzsche otherwise (cf. BGE 44) refers to as the will to power (Heit 2014: 27–46). The underlying idea is that Nietzsche reconstructs human nature on the basis of his hypothesis of the will to power: "*Homo natura*. The will to power" (KSA 12: 2[131]).

Binswanger advances the same idea—namely, that a reconstruction of human nature must be based on a certain principle or idea such as the idea of will to power in Nietzsche or the idea of the pleasure principle in Freud. According to Binswanger, the idea of will to power in Nietzsche is "to give meaning to the suffering of human life" (Binswanger 1947: 184). Likewise, the idea of the pleasure principle in Freud is "to open the possibility for the preservation and enhancement of life" (Binswanger 1947: 184). This is for Binswanger the ultimate purpose of the reconstruction of human nature in Nietzsche and Freud. As such, Binswanger understands Nietzsche's idea of will to power as a special case of Freud's will to pleasure:

> The will to power is a special case of the pleasure principle: Will to pleasure (*Lust*), i.e. will to "life" and will to increase life (*Lebenssteigerung*) by letting be (*Gewährlassen*) the "unknown, uncontrollable powers" through which the human being is lived (*gelebt wird*). (Binswanger 1947: 170)

Both ideas—the will to power and the will to pleasure—offer an account of human nature that is immanent to nature to the extent that the human being lives and is lived by and through nature: powers "through which the human being is lived" (*gelebt wird*) (Binswanger 1947: 170). At the same time, they make possible an account of human cultural productivity that does not rely on ideas of spirit or soul that transcend nature.

On this second point, Binswanger engages Nietzsche against Freud in view of complementing a weakness he detects in Freud's thinking about the drives. For Binswanger, Freud's theory of the drives falls short of articulating an idea of human transformation. For Freud, the nature of the drives (*Triebwesen*) "despite their multiple transformations ultimately remains unchanged," and hence Binswanger infers that "in contraposition to Goethe and Nietzsche, Freud's doctrine of the drives does not articulate a genuine conception of transformation (*Wandlung*)" (Binswanger 1947: 178). The critique voiced by Binswanger in his celebratory speech reflects a deeper, long-standing disagreement between Freud and Binswanger on the status of philosophy, in particular Nietzsche's philosophy, in psychoanalysis.[23] While Binswanger agrees with Freud on the merits of his naturalism, he argues that the re-naturalization of the human being must involve "more" than a theory of drives. He invokes the idea of the *Űbermensch* in Nietzsche as an example for a philosophical-creative reconstruction of human nature that offers a more convincing account of human cultural productivity than Freud's (unphilosophical) scientific naturalism.

Binswanger's mobilization of Nietzsche against Freud on the question of the cultural metamorphoses of the human being has been questioned in the literature based on the textual evidence provided by a passage in BGE 230, where Nietzsche explicitly states that the human being is not "more" than nature (BGE 230) (Gasser 1997). On this view, Nietzsche would agree with Freud that the human being is not "more" than the life of its drives. Interestingly, Freud's own reaction to Binswanger's speech points into a similar direction. In a letter to Binswanger, Freud writes:

> Of course I do not believe you nevertheless. I have always only spent my time in the main floor and basement (*Souterrain*) of the house. You claim that when one changes the perspective, one can also see an upper level where the distinguished guest of religion, art, etc. live. You are not the only one who makes this claim, the majority of cultural exemplars of the *homo natura* think this way. In this respect you are conservative and I am revolutionary. If I would still have a working life ahead of me, then I dare say I would dedicate it to finding a living place for those who claim to be of a higher origin (*Hochgeborenen*) in the lower floors of the house. For religion, I have already found one when I encountered the category of "neurosis." But probably we simply do not understand each other and our disagreement will need a few hundred years to dissolve. (Gasser 1997: 235)[24]

Like Nietzsche, Freud rejects theories of culture based on principles that transcend nature. Freud insists that there is nothing "more" to the human being that would distinguish it from nature and other living beings. But does this mean that Freud's conception of human nature is entirely scientific as Binswanger suggest? A different perspective on the notion of nature in Nietzsche and Freud may address Binswanger's concerns.

5 Recovering an archaic concept of nature

In Jean Granier we find a different position, which both contrasts and complements Binswanger's point of view (1981: 88–102). According to Granier, the common terminology between Nietzsche and Freud—the terms *Es* and *homo natura*—suggests that Freud's conception of the human being as *homo natura* is essentially a philosophical one.[25] When Freud adopts the word *Es,* as coined by Nietzsche to designate the origin of the human being's psychic life, he does not merely adopt a word. Rather, the choice of words in Freud is based

"on a type of reflection that is philosophical in nature" (Granier 1981: 100).[26] Likewise, the reference to *natura* in *homo natura* demonstrates that Freud's reflections on the question of the human being exceed by far the framework of his clinical experience and his sociocultural investigations. Like Binswanger, Granier cites the passage in Freud where he acknowledges the mythological status of his theory of the drives (Binswanger 1947: 160; Freud 1993: 95; Granier 1981: 101). Granier insists that mythology for Freud is by no means an aggregate of illusions and phantasms. Instead, Freud explicitly reestablishes the power of mythology and of myth to reveal (*dévoilment*) truth.

Granier argues that Freud's conception of nature is in many ways comparable with that of Goethe and of the thinkers and artists of the Renaissance, such as Leonardo da Vinci.[27] Furthermore, he holds that Freud's way of speaking of nature reminds us of the "distress and adoration the Greeks experienced before what they named *aidos*," and he infers that mythology in Freud is, as in the Greeks, "a discourse on the origin, on the primordial" (Granier 1981: 101). For Granier, this origin of psychic life represents nothing less than another name for being, for life in its totality, and hence concludes that Freud's, like Nietzsche's conceptions of the human being as *homo natura*, is philosophical.

On Granier's account, when Nietzsche employs the term "*natura*" to determine human nature, the objective is neither to grasp the psychological life of the human being (as in Freud) nor to articulate an anthropology (as in Löwith). Rather, the point of Nietzsche's reconstruction of human nature as *homo natura* is to articulate a new conception of nature, namely, the archaic conception of nature as chaos: "Chaos sive Natura" (KSA 9:21[3] and 9:11[197]).[28] Nature as chaos designates an idea of nature as a creative and abundant force that brings forth life of and out of itself (Babich 2001: 225–45)[29] It is by recovering this creative and artistic force of nature that Nietzsche hopes to unleash within the human being its potential for formation and transformation.

According to Granier, chaos is for Nietzsche the abyssal reality of being as will to power. In both Nietzsche and Freud nature is featured as inaccessible to the human being referring it back to an origin, a ground (*Grund*) that reveals itself as abyss (*Abgrund*).[30] This is where Freud's and Nietzsche's reflections on the nature of the human being again converge. On Granier's hypothesis Freud conceives of the drives of the human being in exactly the same way as Nietzsche conceives of nature, namely as chaos. Granier therefore concludes that by borrowing the term *Es* from Nietzsche, Freud accomplishes the philosophical truth of his psychoanalytical reflections:

> If Nietzsche's and Freud's radical critique of civilization has revolutionized the nature of philosophy, this subversion does not conclude with the destruction (*destruction*) or annulment of philosophy. Rather it leads to an overcoming in the Nietzschean sense of the term *Überwindung*, that is, the reconversion (*reconversion*) of philosophy through a return to the origin that unveils being as something that lies beyond what can be demonstrated by objective reason and thus allows philosophy to reconquer its truth as a discourse of the world. (Granier 1981:102)

Granier's use of the terms "destruction" and "reconversion" no doubt remind us of the notions of deconstruction and reconstruction in Binswanger. However, for Granier, Freud's reconstruction of human nature is no less philosophical than that of Nietzsche.

Although Binswanger and Granier pursue different objectives—to prepare the way for an anthropological-philosophical analysis of human existence in psychoanalysis (Binswanger) and to recover the truth of philosophy as a discourse on nature and the world beyond metaphysics (Granier)—their reconstruction of Nietzsche's and Freud's anthropologies conclude on the same opening toward the future, that is, the transformation of the human being: the metamorphosis of the human being in Binswanger, and the renewal of philosophy in Granier.

Nietzsche articulates this idea of future becoming through the emblematic image of the *Übermensch*, where an overcoming of the human occurs in the name of animality as the human being's eternal source of self-transformation. The *über* in Nietzsche's *Übermensch* may point to yet another meaning of "more (*mehr*)" (BGE 230), which may allow us to reconcile Binswanger with Freud. The prefix "over" in "overhuman" and in "overcoming" denotes the human being's self-overcoming. It does not refer to a vertical relationship that establishes a hierarchy of the human ruling "over" the animal as in BGE 230, where "more" names the human being's "higher" or "different" origin, which transcends nature as in the "siren songs of the old metaphysical bird catchers who have been piping at him [the human being] all too long: 'You are more! You are higher! You are of a different origin!'" (BGE 230). Rather, "over" refers to a horizontal relationship that establishes the equivalence between the human and the natural. In the Nietzschean term "overhuman," the prefix "over" is hence used neither to separate the human from nature, nor to set one above the other (Lemm 2009: 19–23). The "over" in "overhuman" is to remind us that nature is "more" than the human being. The reconstruction of human nature is thus not a "return to nature" but an elevation of the human being through the recovery

of the "more" of nature, its generative and creative force. The re-naturalization of the human being is a movement that takes the human being "up into a high, free, even frightful nature and naturalness" (TI "Skirmishes" 48).[31]

Notes

1 In this chapter, I rely on the following abbreviations of Nietzsche's work: A = *The Antichrist*; BGE = *Beyond Good and Evil*; GM = *On the Genealogy of Morals*; GS = *The Gay Science*; HH = *Human, All too Human*; HL = *Second Untimely Consideration*; KSA = Friedrich Nietzsche, Sämtliche Werke, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, *Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988) (references provide the volume number followed by the relevant fragment number and any relevant aphorism; all translations of KSA are mine); TI = *Twilight of the Idols* (sections abbreviated as "Errors" and "Skirmishes"); TL = "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense" (KSA 1); WS = *The Wanderer and His Shadows* (HH, vol. 2, part 2); Z = *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

2 See Leiter (2013) and Emden (2014).

3 All translations of Binswanger are mine.

4 Nietzsche and Freud distance themselves from both the humanism and the scientism of the Enlightenment. Nietzsche in particular is well aware of the dialectic of enlightenment and rejects its desire for knowledge at any price, for "objective" truth, and he invokes the Greeks, who "knew how to live: what is needed for that is to stop bravely at the surface, the fold, the skin" (GS P4).

5 See Sommer (2016: 650–51); and Brusotti (2014: 129).

6 For a more extensive discussion of Nietzsche's philosophy of plants and naturalism, see Lemm (2016: 61–80).

7 Binswanger extends this point also to the life of plants by drawing an interesting comparison between the scientific idea of the archaic plant (*Urpflanze*) and Freud's idea of *homo natura*, two ideas that were designed to explain the creative nature of organic life (1947: 164). Binswanger approvingly cites Goethe's account of the metamorphosis of the plant as an analogy for his own reflections on the cultural transformations of human nature (1947: 178).

8 For a discussion of Nietzsche and philosophical anthropology in Löwith, see Lemm, forthcoming.

9 I agree with Bertino (2011: 3–34) that "humanization" (*Vermenschlichung*) needs to be distinguished from the more general thesis of the anthropomorphism of human knowledge in Nietzsche (i.e., the idea that humans project themselves onto the world). While humanization reflects a form of domination over the animality of the human being, anthropomorphism cannot be done away with and is a

constitutive feature of perspectivism in Nietzsche. Furthermore, Bertino correctly holds that the "naturalization" (*Vernatürlichung*) of the human being needs to be distinguished from naturalistic reductionism.

10 On the context of Binswanger's solemn homage and Freud's reaction to it, see Gasser (1997): chapter 17.

11 In HH I 106, during his so-called scientific period, Nietzsche seems to have entertained a similar fantasy. On the relation between necessity and creativity in Nietzsche, see Large (1990: 50–52), who argues that Nietzsche's flirtation with an all-knowing, calculating intelligence in HH will be long forgotten by the time of GS as it contains some of Nietzsche's most scathing attacks on the prejudices of sciences (GS 373).

12 Leiter's (2007: 89–90) naturalistic account of Nietzsche's fatalism illustrates this kind of nihilism insofar as it draws a deterministic worldview where human freedom and creativity are reduced to mere illusions. For Binswanger, the misunderstanding of scientific reduction in Freud is based on the erroneous translation of the "a priori or essential possibilities of human existence into processes of genetic development" (*apriorische oder wesensmässige Möglichkeiten des menschlichen Existierens in genetische Entwicklungsprozesse*). Such a translation of existence into natural history is, for example, reflected in attempts to explain "the religious way of existing as a result of the fear and helplessness of the child, . . . the artistic way of existing as a result of the pleasure in beautiful appearance, etc." (Binswanger 1947: 185).

13 On the change of meaning from "terrible" (*schrecklich*) to "eternal" in BGE 230, see Lampert (2001: 229–30).

14 This is an ongoing theme in Nietzsche's philosophy beginning with TL (1) where he argues that the human intellect is not the sign of the human being's privileged access to knowledge but a master in the dissimulation and fabrication of illusions for the sake of self-preservation. The human being, more than any other animal, stands in need of protection which explains why it had to form societies to protect itself against a threatening and essentially dangerous environment (TL and GM).

15 See GS 115, where Nietzsche claims that when one has subtracted the errors that constitute the vain beliefs in the superiority of the human being, then one has subtracted also all its so-called humanity: "The four errors—the human being has been educated by its errors: first, it saw itself only incompletely; secondly, it endowed itself with fictitious attributes; thirdly, it placed itself in a false rank order in relation to animals and nature; fourthly, it invented ever new tables of goods and for a time took them to be eternal and unconditioned, so that now this and that human drive and condition occupied first place and was ennobled as a result of this valuation. If one discounts the effect of these four errors, one has also discounted humanity, humanness and 'human dignity.'"

16 "Stupidity" is often a reference to animality in Nietzsche, typically employed to reverse the prejudice of the human being's "superiority in comparison to the animals," as, for example, in HL 1.

17 On Nietzsche's critical response to the idea of "return to nature" in Rousseau, see TI "Skirmishes" 48, as well as his critique of romanticism in GS 59.

18 In another posthumously published note, Nietzsche also claims that it is through the body that "we" make value judgments: "'The body is the best advisor, the body (*Leib*) can at least be studied,' something which is not the case for the 'soul'" (KSA 11:25[485]). See also Z, "On the Despisers of the Body": "But he who is awakened and knowing says: body (*Leib*) am I and nothing else; and soul is only a word for something about the body (*Leibe*)."

19 Cited in Binswanger (1947: 160); see also Granier (1981: 101).

20 See, by way of comparison with Nietzsche, BGE 226.

21 Acampora (2006) coins the term "artful naturalism" to capture this aspect of Nietzsche's naturalism.

22 According to Bishop (2009: 12–24), the naturalization of humanity is also at stake in Carl Gustav Jung's psychology. From his perspective, by calling for a new conception of nature, one that dismisses the notion of laws in nature, Nietzsche is calling for a new conception of the human being (HH 3).

23 On the controversies around Freud's relationship to Nietzsche, see Gasser (1997) and Assoun (2000). For a useful overview of Freud's main objections against philosophy (including Nietzsche's philosophy), see Beekman (2009/2010: 98–118). Beekman shows that "Freud hasn't brought in an element against philosophy that Nietzsche wouldn't have understood" and that therefore "Nietzsche cannot be the object of Freud's contempt for philosophers" (2009/2010: 114). Instead, Beekman argues, "Nietzsche, the great psychologist," already anticipated the limits to which Freud admits and that therefore Freud's "meta-psychology" would not be any less metaphysical than he claims Nietzsche's philosophy to be (2009/2010: 117).

24 The translation is my own.

25 Granier seems to think that Freud also adopted the term "*homo natura*" from Nietzsche, but, as far as I am aware, it is Binswanger who applies Nietzsche's coinage to describe Freud's conception of the human being. According to Gasser, Freud was not aware that Binswanger was actually citing Nietzsche when he defined his conception of the human being in terms of *homo natura*.

26 All translations of Granier are my own.

27 Löwith makes a similar point in relation to Nietzsche, namely, that Nietzsche's reconstruction of human nature is largely inspired by the historical-philosophical examples of natural humanity provided by Greek antiquity and the human being in the Renaissance, as well as a few individual examples from modernity such as Goethe and Napoleon.

28 See Granier (1977: 135–41) and Babich (2001: 225–45).

29 See also Strong (2015: 19–31) and Hatab (2015: 32–48).

30 See also Nietzsche on this point: "The re-naturalization of the human being requires the willingness to accept the sudden and unpredictable (*Durchkreuzende*)" (KSA 9:11[228]).

31 See also "The re-naturalization of the human being in the 19th century (the 18th century is the century of elegance, finesse and generous sentiments) Not 'return to nature': for there never existed a human naturalness (*natürliche Menschheit*). Scholastics un- and anti-natural values is the rule, is the beginning; the human being reaches nature only after a long struggle—he never 'returns'. . . . Nature, i.e., to dare to be immoral like nature" (KSA 12:10[53].182).

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11

Reading Dostoevsky in Turin: The Antichrist's Accelerationism

Gary Shapiro

1 Nietzsche's accelerationism

Nietzsche aimed at splitting time into two great parts, before and after himself (EH Destiny 8). Just after finishing *The Antichrist*, he says that this happens through uncovering the truth of Christian morality "an event without parallel." During his last two years of frantic writing, Nietzsche was avidly reading Dostoevsky. One of the Russian novelist's most "philosophical" characters and psychological studies is Kirillov, who plans a suicide that will divide history into two parts: "From the gorilla to the destruction of God, and from the destruction of God to . . . the physical changing of the earth and man" (Dostoevsky 1995 115). Kirillov's program derives from a militant atheism. His will be an absolutely free suicide affirming human freedom and defying all superstitious belief in God. Kirillov sees history until himself as the time of the "God-Man" Christ; the coming era will be that of the "Man-God" (who may resemble Nietzsche's *Übermensch* or his Antichrist). His theorizing seems to be heavily indebted to Feuerbach, whose materialistic reduction of Christianity made a strong impression on the atheists in Dostoevsky's youthful radical circle. Dostoevsky thought Kirillov's reasoning was demonic, and there's no reason to think that Nietzsche endorsed this idea of history-changing suicide. However, the coincidence with Kirillov's thesis, combined with the claim that the great change can be accelerated and associated with the act of an individual, opens up a window on the ideas of time and history structuring Nietzsche's *Antichrist*. In a late letter to Georg Brandes announcing the completion of *Ecce Homo*, he praises Dostoevsky for having given him "the most valuable psychological material known to me" (Nietzsche 1986 8.483).[1] After describing how Nietzsche

drew on the complex of acceleration and retardation central to the Christian theological complex connected with the Antichrist, I will indicate some ways in which he deployed the incomparable "psychological material" he gleaned from Dostoevsky in formulating his still insufficiently explored "philosophy of the Antichrist."

Many believe Nietzsche had some success in provoking a great historical schism and marking it with his name. They see him as pointing the way toward an acceleration of time increasingly at work in modernity or late capitalism. The political theory known as accelerationism typically invokes his example, frequently citing these lines from Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972):

> Which is the revolutionary path? Is there one?—To withdraw from the world market, as Samir Amin advises Third World countries to do, in a curious revival of the fascist "economic solution"? Or might it be to go in the opposite direction? To go still further, that is, in the movement of the market of decoding and deterritorialization? For perhaps the codes are not deterritorialized enough, not decoded enough, from the viewpoint of a theory and a practice of a highly schizophrenic character. Not to withdraw from the process, but to go further, to "accelerate the process," as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven't seen anything yet. (Deleuze and Guattari, first publication 1972 239–40)

This quotation bears the marks of its time, referring to controversies about whether and how to impede totalizing global capitalism. Acceleration is a crucial dimension of both Nietzsche's book *The Antichrist* and the religious theologeme from which it takes its name. In the last two years of his writing Nietzsche was increasingly preoccupied with issues of speed and acceleration, on the one hand, and of tendencies to slow and delay on the other. Deleuze and Guattari may be referring to this passage from Nietzsche's fall 1887 notes: "The equalization of European humans is the great process, which cannot be delayed: rather, it should be accelerated [*beschleunigen*]" (Nietzsche 1980 12.425). The context could make neo-Marxist accelerationists uncomfortable, for it occurs in a *Nachlass* fragment entitled "The Future Strong Ones." It suggests that the equalizing of Europeans will open up a space for a new sovereign affirmative race or species; in relation to those hegemonic rulers the homogenized will serve as a useful underclass. In GM Nietzsche imagines a "freethinker" (not a "free spirit") who responds to the picture he has drawn of the accelerating predominance of the herd or mob:

> The progress of this poisoning throughout the entire body of humankind seems unstoppable, its tempo and pace from now on can be ever slower, more

> subtle, less audible, more thoughtful—one has time after all. . . . It appears that [the church] sooner hinders and retards than accelerates that progress? Well, that in itself could be its usefulness. (GM I.9)

The contrast between Nietzsche's accelerationism and the freethinker's hope that the church can slow things down reproduces a classic antinomy concerning time that is central to the traditional Antichrist theme, Nietzsche's version of it, and Dostoevsky's psychology of nihilism. Indeed, in one strand of church doctrine it is the church itself which both hastens and slows the eschatological process by participating in the "mystery of iniquity" (Agamben 2017).

Accelerationism names a tendency of political thought that originated in the 1990s. Its most prominent theorists and exponents are a group of current and former academics in the UK, many associated with Warwick University. The tendency arises from distress with the growing dominance of neoliberal social and economic organization and disappointment at the ineffectiveness of conventional political resistance.[2] The authors of a 2017 manifesto argue that an oppositional politics of demonstrations, direct action, and localism does nothing more than establish "small and temporary spaces of non-capitalist social relations, eschewing the real problems entailed in facing foes which are intrinsically non-local, abstract, and rooted deep in our everyday infrastructure." Accelerationist politics would be explicitly oriented toward "a modernity of abstraction, complexity, globality, and technology" (Williams and Srnicek 2017, 354). From the accelerationist perspective, capitalism demonstrates a capacity for rapid change and innovation, as noted already in the *Communist Manifesto*: "Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones" (Marx 1994, 161). However, despite the continuing appearance of novelty in such areas as consumer electronics, we are now experiencing a period of relative stagnation. The only real alternative for an oppositional politics is to endorse and contribute to the system's potential for acceleration, which would push it to a breaking point, as anticipated by Marx or Nietzsche. Benjamin Noys formulates this program in a thoughtful critique: "Our immersion in immanence is required to speed the process to the moment of transcendence as threshold. In this way immanence is paired with a (deferred) transcendence and defeat is turned into victory" (Noys 2014, 7–8).

From this perspective, accelerationism exemplifies a recurring type of political thought that finds both religious and nonreligious expression. Speed and acceleration are understood as primary provocations of massive change which

must be furthered or resisted, depending on whether the anticipated change is envisioned with fear or hope. The accelerationists correctly see Nietzsche as a crucial forerunner of 1970s theorists who turned his "accelerate the process" to their own purposes. These include Deleuze and Guattari (especially *Anti-Oedipus*), Jean-François Lyotard (*Libidinal Economy*), and Jean Baudrillard. Nietzsche belatedly became the tendency's paradigmatic philosophical proponent a century after placing "a philosophy of the Antichrist" on the agenda in BGE (256). In developing that philosophy he drew both on older theological discussions and on Dostoevsky's writings about the drama of atheist nihilism.

Everything about *The Antichrist* is rushed. The writer moves quickly, breathlessly, from one charge against Christianity to another. He imagines scrawling his condemnations on walls, in inscriptions so powerful even the blind would read them (A 62). He not only hastens to give voice to a new persona, the Antichrist; he also cannot wait to alter the fundamental terms in which human time is reckoned and recorded. True to his word, he declares that the first day of the new calendar replaces September 30, 1888, the date (in the "false time scheme") on which his screed was completed and his avatar, the Antichrist, signed its concluding "Decree Against Christianity." Nietzsche's impatience is palpable throughout, as in his exasperated exclamation "Almost two millennia and not a single new god!" (A 19). He is bored, disgusted, and appalled by the long reign of "Christian monotono-theism." Although the book's Foreword acknowledges that a time besotted with "the wretched ephemeral chatter of politics and national egoism" is not ready for his performative intervention, and while conceding that his message will reach only a few, by book's end he issues his take-no-prisoners "Decree," signed in the Antichrist's name. This accelerationist book has its own internal rhythm of acceleration, not unlike a Dostoevsky novel. Earlier, Nietzsche himself gave proleptic indications of the need to focus on the tempo of his writings (BGE 28, 246–47).

As we know from the publications, letters, and notes of his last productive year, Nietzsche's program was on a constantly accelerating trajectory; he projected completion of a great project, "The Transvaluation of All Values," and anticipated an immediate widespread impact. His earlier plans called for a four-volume system of "The Transvaluation." Even though he'd written that he distrusted all systematizers and that "the will to a system is a lack of integrity" (TI "Maxims" 26), Nietzsche was finally tempted to compete, at least on the level of book structure and publication, with contemporary thinkers like Herbert Spencer, Eduard von Hartmann, and August Comte who offered

multivolume systems of philosophy, including their purported political and social implications for Western modernity. Within a few months the larger project congealed into one brief book in a feverish spasm of writing and revision. This was the same Nietzsche (yet what does "same" mean here?) who had ridiculed the haste of modern life and allowed that his work would be truly understood only in the centuries after his death. Yet, now he imagined that *The Antichrist* would appear simultaneously in large editions in seven languages.

Nietzsche's project draws on concepts taken from the traditional theologico-political complex surrounding the Antichrist figure. He transforms them in developing his own thought concerning time and timing. *The Antichrist* can be best understood by articulating Nietzsche's response to two bodies of critical thought and literary imagination, represented by two figures of sharply contrasting tendency and temperament, Franz Overbeck and Fyodor Dostoevsky. Nietzsche's friend Overbeck was on the cutting edge of nineteenth-century critical and scholarly research on the history of Christianity; he provided an acute analysis of the earliest Christian community and critically explored the genesis of Christian political theology without attempting to placate any church.[3] Nietzsche excitedly records his discovery of Dostoevsky in a letter of February 23, 1887, to Overbeck:

> In a bookshop my hand just happened to come to rest on *L'Espirit souterraine* [*Notes from Underground*], a recent French translation (the same kind of chance made me light on Schopenhauer when I was twenty-one, and on Stendhal when I was thirty-five!) The instinct or affinity (or what should I call it?) spoke to me instantaneously—my joy was beyond bounds; not since my first encounter with Stendhal's *Rouge et noir* have I known such joy. (Nietzsche 1986 8.27–28)

In triangulating between cool skeptical critique and the novelist's feverish drama, Nietzsche constructed his own outrageous *a*theological-political treatise. It opposes a thoroughgoing accelerationism to his contemporaries' prevailing gradualism and evolutionism.

2 Restraining and accelerating

In *The Antichrist* Nietzsche tackles the question of time immediately. He appeals straightaway to a select community of "Hyperboreans" who live outside and beyond modernity (A 1). This modernity, Nietzsche explains in his polemics against Hegelian-style "world-history," takes historical time to be progressive,

as in its belief in the increasing growth of enlightenment, civilization, and the gradual improvement of the human race. "Progress is merely a modern idea, that is to say a false idea" (A 4). A passage on the *Übermensch* explains that he is not talking about a new species that would replace the human in the regular, Darwinian course of evolution. Extraordinary human beings may be "lucky accidents" (*Glucksfälle*) or deliberately bred. In either case, Nietzsche is (perhaps unwittingly) closer to Cuvier's catastrophism than to Darwin's evolutionary gradualism (A 4).

Articulating his rejection of modernity, Nietzsche insists that the present is a time of "*décadence*" rather than progress (A 6). Life is growth, but the contemporary world is depraved, having lost its growth-oriented instincts. Nihilism, acceding to this loss, substitutes pity directed to the suffering and weak for affirmative increase of power. Modernity is slow descent, not evolution to higher forms. Rather than congratulating ourselves for modern progress, we should be calling on cultural physicians to diagnose our maladies (A 7).

In this rapidly unfolding argument, Nietzsche the cultural physician turns his clinical gaze on theologians and "all that has theologian blood in its veins…—our entire philosophy" (A 8). Theology, he explains in *The Antichrist*, is an ideological construct—a complex of lies—designed to insure priestly power (A 52–55). In that sense, all theology is political theology. Although he paints with a very broad brush Nietzsche's criticism is grounded in the careful researches of scholars like Overbeck and Julius Wellhausen (Overbeck 1875; Wellhausen 1891).

How better to turn the tables on the theologians than to adopt the persona of their arch-bogeyman? Here is a schematic account of traditional theological thought concerning the Antichrist, specifically with respect to questions of temporality and history.[4] As the decades following the crucifixion passed, it became difficult for Jesus's followers to believe they were living in his kingdom. Within two or three generations texts indicating the character and timing of a great transformation were incorporated into the practices of the growing community. Most prominently, Apocalypse (Revelation) presents a detailed scenario of the rapture of the elect, the rise of worldwide tyranny under an evil leader (eventually identified as Antichrist), the spectacular battle of good and evil, Christ's earthly reign, and the last judgment, after which time will be no more, with the damned and the saved now in their eternal places. Also circulating was the Second Letter to the Thessalonians, attributed (now uncertainly) to Paul. The writer warns that although extreme changes will come, we must be wary of expecting them anytime soon. The letter helps to constitute the Christian philosophy of history that took shape in the next two

or three centuries and which, especially in its later Hegelian form, is Nietzsche's constant target:

> Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth [*katechon*] that he might be revealed in his time [*kairo*]. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. (2 Thess. 2:3-7)

This lawless (*anomos*) man is identified as Antichrist (1 Jn 2:18-22; cf. 2 Jn 7). These scraps and hints were later bolstered by speculative interpretations of prophecies in the Hebrew scriptures, especially Daniel.

As early as the second century Tertullian explicitly identified the Roman Empire as the restraining force (*katechon*) that held back the lawless man or Antichrist; this view gained traction as the church crystallized. Overbeck notes that even the relatively early Acts of the Apostles already stressed the importance of Paul's Roman citizenship, a consideration eventually contributing to Constantine's "donation" of empire to church.

Nietzsche would have known that his housemate Overbeck's doctoral thesis concerned the church father Hippolytus's treatise *On Christ and Antichrist*. Hippolytus provided a checklist of features by which the lawless man could be identified; more importantly he offered a hermeneutic argument to show that his coming was hundreds of years in the future. The restraining force (*katechon*) was active; a succession of various kingdoms would rise and fall before the Antichrist appeared (McGinn 2000).

The theological complex centered on apocalypse and Antichrist generated (at least) two distinct approaches to time and history. In so far as the Christian mainstream followed Hippolytus in deferring the events, it opened a space for a philosophy of history, occupied by thinkers from Augustine to Hegel. Even post-Hegelian philosophies of history with no explicit commitment to Christianity typically work with patterns and questions established in this tradition. Alternatively, the apocalypse and Antichrist themes present ideas of radical breaks, ruptures, and accelerations, the end of the world, and of a condition in which "time is no more." It's a question of speed and acceleration.

Nietzsche was never a gradualist. In 1874, well before he animated the Antichrist figure, with Germany still basking in victory over France and

Bismarck's declaration of the Reich, Nietzsche declared that catastrophe or collapse were inevitable.

For a century we have been preparing for absolutely fundamental convulsions:

> And if there have recently been attempts to oppose this deepest of modern inclinations, to collapse or to explode, with the constitutive power of the so-called nation-state, the latter too will for a long time serve only to augment the universal insecurity and atmosphere of menace. (UM III.4)

Nietzsche saw the old order crumbling, and began to discern on the horizon the imminent arrival of "free spirits," "good Europeans," "philosophers of the future," and of course, the *Übermensch*. This catastrophist dimension of Nietzsche's thought became one of its main appeals for thinkers like Heidegger, Foucault, and Deleuze.

The Antichrist theme is closely intertwined with Nietzsche's development of a phenomenology of time, emphasizing a spectrum of modalities: speed, acceleration, continuous growth, stagnation, and delay. The concluding section of "Peoples and Fatherlands" in BGE enigmatically introduces the idea of "a philosophy of the Antichrist." Reviewing the significance of a series of distinguished nineteenth-century writers, artists, and political figures Nietzsche praises these "higher human beings" for transcending narrow cultural or national identities. Yet, they failed to fulfill their promise. Nietzsche claims that they all finally made peace with Christianity (as in Wagner's *Parsifal*), and that "none would have been capable of a philosophy of the Antichrist" (BGE 256).

What is to be done? In spring 1886, when he completed *Beyond* with its anticipation of a philosophy of the Antichrist, Nietzsche added a new Preface to HH that speaks of accelerating the arrival of the "free spirits" invented for that book: "I see them already coming, slowly, slowly; and perhaps I shall do something to accelerate (*beschleunigen*) their coming if I describe in advance under what vicissitudes, upon what paths, I see them coming?--" (HH P2). Nietzsche is asking how to evoke and think acceleration, both in the register of the "free spirits" and in the *Kirchensprache* of the Antichrist complex, a theologeme articulated in terms of temporal modalities such as slowing, accelerating, rhythm.

3 Timing is everything

Throughout Nietzsche's late works there's a sense that modern life is torn between rhythms of acceleration and retardation. Two images of temporality

are pitted against one another. On the one hand, the strange specter of nihilism is at the door *now* (Nietzsche 1980 12.125). Europeans are quickly losing the bonds of national identity and traditional religion. Many are becoming nomadic workers (recently dubbed the precariat) and no longer live within a monocultural framework. Americanization speeds up daily life, eliminating time for reflection with a constant round of work, activities, and appointments (GS 392). Europeans have entered what Nietzsche calls "the century of the multitude [*Menge*]," a time in which a diverse, media-sensitive public is swayed by waves of enthusiasm, opinion, and rumor (BGE 256).

However, powerful forces are set against these accelerations, most obviously church and state. Either separately or in alliance they maintain borders, traditions, and customs. The church's "monotonotheism" is matched by the state's insistence on absolute sovereignty. Modern humans not only are subject to the waning power of the church and the "cold monster" of the state (Z I.11), but also are entangled in a system of financial and psychological debt. Priests become this economy's financial officers and debt collectors, where the mortgage is always due. So-called secular society may substitute bankers for priests, and credit ratings for one's standing with the church, but the effect is similar: accumulated debt steers its subjects into long-term behaviors calculated to maintain their ability to pay and assume additional debt. The greater the collective debt, so it seems, the greater is the system's stability. Living time has been amortized. Debt and guilt become the equivalent of political theology's *katechon*.[5]

4 Dostoevsky, apocalypse, and acceleration

While the accelerationism that arose in the 1990s is devoid of explicit theological implications, it can be read as welcoming the capitalist world's end by pushing it to its explosive conclusion, casting aside any katechonic restraint (social democratic or welfare state safety nets). Accelerationists who invoke Nietzsche are touching unwittingly on more deeply rooted traditional themes than they suspect. Nietzsche already anticipated rapid change. As Zarathusra intones: "O my brothers, am I then cruel? But I say: to what is falling one should give a further push!" (Z III.12.20). Dostoevsky also saw collapse coming and his work gave Nietzsche a push in formulating his accelerationist manifesto, *The Antichrist*.

Nietzsche "discovered" Dostoevsky sometime around January 1887. Traces of Dostoevsky's apocalyptic sensibility are evident in Nietzsche's last two years of writing. As he wrote to Brandes in November 1888:

> I prize his work . . . as the most valuable psychological material known to me—I am grateful to him in a remarkable way, however much he goes against my deepest instincts. (Nietzsche 1986 8.483)

In 1887–88 Nietzsche read two of Dostoevsky's major novels, *The Idiot* and *Demons,* as well as some shorter works. These feature several characters obsessed with religious questions involving apocalypse and Antichrist, including one who purports to be a student of the Apocalypse of John of Patmos. The Eastern Orthodox Church, Dostoevsky's religious anchor, had long nurtured the belief that Moscow was the third and final "Rome," following the corruption of the papacy and the fall of Constantinople (Benz 1963, 175–83). Just a decade before Dostoevsky's birth, Napoleon was widely seen as the Antichrist in Russia, a belief heightened by his threat to Moscow. In *Demons*, the character Shatov, provoked toward a "holy Russia" form of Orthodoxy by the devilish Stavrogin, reminds his erstwhile companion that he had earlier accused the Catholic Church of having surrendered to the devil's third temptation, worldly power, and consequently proclaiming the Antichrist (Dostoevsky 1995 249). The "idiot" Prince Myshkin feverishly announces the same charge at the disastrous party where he breaks a prized Chinese vase while wildly gesturing, and falls into an epileptic fit (Dostoevsky 2003 543).

Advocates of the Eastern Orthodox cause harbored memories of the Crusades, in which Catholic forces looted and occupied Byzantium, contributing to the weakness that later allowed its loss to the Ottomans. Nietzsche's contempt for Crusaders is constant throughout his work, reaching fever pitch in *The Antichrist*. He specifically charges the Crusaders with the devastation of a high Islamic culture, describing them as engaging in "higher piracy" seeking "booty" from the Eastern world, which included Byzantium (AC 60; Shapiro, 2007). Dostoevsky's resentment of the Germans can perhaps be traced back to the ravages inflicted by the Teutonic Order in the Baltic and northern Russia (cf. Benz 1963, 193–94).

Both *Demons* and *The Idiot* have sharply accelerating rhythms. Rapid changes of mood, alliance, and enmity, explosive confrontations and gatherings, all convey the sense that everything is hurtling feverishly toward a terrible epiphany. This sense of speed and acceleration is surely prominent in "the most valuable psychological material" Nietzsche cites.[6] Acceleration then is both an explicit

theme and a stylistic, formal feature of Dostoevsky's novels. Characters—both readers of the Bible and nihilists—see things moving ever more quickly toward catastrophe, while the texture and rhythm of unfolding events produces a vertiginous sense of acceleration.

In both *The Idiot* and *Demons* Dostoevsky portrays destructive nihilists, figures radicalized by European science and enlightenment. In so far as they are inspired by those sources, their nihilism exemplifies Nietzsche's lapidary definition: "The highest values devalue themselves" (Nietzsche 1980 12.350) and the *Genealogy*'s conclusion that "humans still prefer to *will nothingness*, than *not* will" (GM III.28). Rejecting most traditional religious, social, and political institutions, they are bent on doing whatever they can to disrupt and shatter the world into which they were born—as quickly as possible. Much of this is inspired by contemporary Russian political ferment, crime, and scandal, notably the anarchist Nechaev's 1869 notorious murder of the student Ivanov. The title of *Demons* (Russian, *Besi*), it's been plausibly suggested, refers not to personified supernatural beings, but to demonic ideas—such as secularism, socialism, and egalitarianism—which can possess the minds of living men and women, driving them headlong to destruction and self-destruction. The villainous Pyotr Verkovhensky has organized a cell of five revolutionaries in the provincial town where *Demons* takes place. Pyotr is the neglected son of Stepan Verkovhensky, an ineffective liberal who imagines himself an internal exile under surveillance. Stepan was also tutor to Nikolai Stavrogin, a wealthy young man who claims to be beyond good and evil. Stavrogin has provoked local dignitaries by outrageous acts, pulling the nose of a local member of the gentry and biting the governor's ear. He reveals his shocking marriage to a lame, mentally disabled woman, while gossip swirls about his compromising relations with two other women. Stavrogin has inspired both renewed religious belief and nihilistic revolutionary fervor (Nietzsche was unaware of the chapter "At Tikhon's" which was censored in early editions. There Stavrogin acknowledges his abuse of a young girl—which provoked her suicide—to the holy monk Tikhon). Stepan's vague and hypocritical liberalism, it's implied, is responsible for the nihilism of his son and student. To solidify his clandestine cell, Pyotr pushes them to murder a supposedly untrustworthy former comrade, binding them together in mutual guilt (this parallels Nechaev's orchestrated killing).

The splitting of history must happen soon; perhaps the break will bear the name of a singular individual (Kirillov, Nietzsche, Zarathustra, Dionysus?) just as history until now takes the name of Christ. What better name than Antichrist to indicate the coming era? The Antichrist is the great accelerator. He accelerates

change, surprising the world with dramatic gestures. Dostoevsky's nihilists differ sharply. Kirillov pursues a history-changing suicide; Pyotr delights in chaos, destruction, and violation, cynically using revolutionary ideas simply to seduce followers. Stavrogin aspires to be coolly beyond good and evil; he deliberately provokes crime and scandal. In addition to rejecting established values and practices, all are accelerationists who see confirmation of their tendency in Russia's rapid social changes, and take pride in accelerating them. Nietzsche, I suggest, found such rhythms stimulating.

Nietzsche's notes on *Demons* do not suggest that he found this version of the idea of going beyond humanity attractive. I believe what he found most compelling in Kirillov was his project of *accelerating* a great event he hoped to initiate. Dostoevsky shows Kirillov as a character possessed by a demon of an idea. Nietzsche had already written of such demonic ideas in the signature announcements of the death of God and eternal recurrence (GS 125, 341), so he likely found confirmation of this demonic psychology in Dostoevsky. In BGE, written before he knew Dostoevsky's work, he speculates that the strength of will building up in Russia will, in the next century, provoke "the struggle for hegemony over the earth (*Erd-Herrschaft*)—the *compulsion* to great politics" (BGE 208). Nietzsche had unknowingly prepared the ground for his discovery of Dostoevsky.

The novelist shows the treacherously demonic nature of Kirillov's idea; he writes a false confession to murder and other crimes in support of Pyotr's nihilist conspiracy, although Pyotr's fivesome has no great sympathy for his project. In dialogue with Stavrogin, Kirillov says that there are moments when time stops, becoming "not future eternal but here eternal," apparently thinking he can produce such a moment through his suicide. Stavrogin responds "without any irony, slowly and as if thoughtfully. 'In the Apocalypse the angel swears that time will be no more'" (Dostoevsky 1995 236; Apocalypse 10:6). Myshkin also explores this extreme of temporality. As an "idiot" he lives outside of ordinary historical and social time, providing Nietzsche with a contemporary clue to the life of that other "idiot," Jesus. Stavrogin, the devilish Byronic figure who inspires both religious fervor and extreme nihilism in others, is torn between acceleration and delay. He approaches repentance, but draws back; he throws himself into shocking activity that speeds up the descent to chaos; as the novel proceeds he seems to regret his earlier excesses and to seek redemption. The novel concludes with his suicide.

Both *Demons* and *The Idiot* feature extended scenes in which swelling gatherings of passionate, often antagonistic people become increasingly chaotic,

and occasionally violent. Misfortune, accident, scandal, and humiliation follow upon one another in dizzying succession.[7] In *Demons,* events cascade into psychic and social abysses. I give an abbreviated account of one extended emblematic sequence, a great *fête* arranged by the governor's wife and its fiery aftermath. Before it begins, the event is beset by scandalous rumors that unsettle the guests. The "literary salon" that initiated the day's festivities is first kidnapped by drunk and clownish vulgarians. Then the distinguished literary man (a stand-in for Dostoevsky's bête noire Turgenev) bores and confuses his audience for an hour, in a supposed final goodbye to his readers. Next, the ineffective old liberal provokes the crowd's derision with an aesthetic discourse; he breaks down in sobs during his own speech. A final "maniac" speaker raves and gesticulates so wildly, polemicizing against Russia, that he's finally dragged off the stage before the agitated audience. Some of the crowd reassemble later for a farcical "literary quadrille" and a ball, where there is little dancing but much drinking, and nervous anticipation of unknown but suspected further scandal. The gathering is galvanized by reports of fire in part of the town and more chaos ensues there. The governor is hit by a falling beam; he recovers bodily but remains permanently disturbed in his mind. After raging for hours, the fire dies down, but then shocking reports are heard of the murder of Stavrogin's odd wife and her roguish brother. Meanwhile, Stavrogin had run off with Liza, a wealthy, upper-class young woman, another student of the older Verkovhensky. Against his warnings she hurries to the scene of the murder, where some of the drunk and angry crowd, recognizing Liza as "Stavrogin's woman," beat her to death.

In his treatment of these characters and others in *Demons,* Dostoevsky makes it clear that all are struggling with the consequences of the conflict of religious belief and atheism. The inner turmoil expresses itself in crime, cruelty, betrayal, murder, and suicide. A pervasive atmosphere of scandal and dread mounts by startling increments as the story proceeds. As noted, Nietzsche praises Dostoevsky's psychological acuity, and claims to have learned much of importance from him. I suggest that what he learned from *Demons* reinforced and gave vital color to his own perception that the "uncanny guest" of nihilism was at the doors of the West. Dostoevsky provided a thick psychological and social panorama of a multitude shaken by—possessed—by ideas generated in the wake of God's death. More specifically, he depicted the *accelerating* rhythm he saw transforming Russian life, perhaps moving even more quickly than in Western Europe.

Nietzsche took extensive notes on *Demons*, although it is not explicitly cited in his finished works. On the other hand, he clearly alludes to *The Idiot* in *The*

Antichrist's portrait of Jesus. He ridicules Ernest Renan's popular *Life of Jesus* saying

> that buffoon *in psychologis* has appropriated for his explication of the type Jesus the two *most inapplicable* concepts possible in this case: the concept of the *genius* and the concept of the *hero* . . .. Our whole concept, our cultural concept "spirit," had no meaning whatever in the world Jesus lived in. To speak with the precision of the physiologist a quite different word would rather be in place here: the word idiot. (A 29)

Writing exultantly to Overbeck in February 1887 about his discovery of Dostoevsky, Nietzsche contrasts him with Renan: "This winter I have also read Renan's *Origines* [*of Christianity*], with much spite—and little profit. This whole history of conditions and *sentiments* [in French] in Asia Minor seems to me to hang comically in the air. At root, my distrust goes so far as to question if history is really possible" (Nietzsche 1986 8.27–28). Nietzsche accuses Renan of having in effect written a sentimental nineteenth-century novel (Shapiro 1982). In this case the professed novelist has greater psychological insight than the would-be historian, a point made explicitly in *The Antichrist*: "One has to regret that no Dostoevsky lived in the neighborhood of this most interesting decadent; I mean someone who could feel the thrilling combination of such a combination of the sublime, the sick, and the childish" (A 31).

Nietzsche's distinctive thesis about Jesus is that he is best understood outside the traditional conventions of narrative (Shapiro 1989, 124–41). Renan tells a story of Jesus's development and so (reflectively or not) adapts some patterns of the nineteenth-century novel. In contrast Dostoevsky's "idiot" prince Myshkin is meant to be the story of what the author called "a perfectly beautiful man." Myshkin is humble and compassionate; he does not harbor common resentments or nurse grudges. In biblical terms he does not resist evil. In a sense he lives outside time. While those around him become enraged, despairing, or mad, he retains a childlike simplicity. A victim of chronic epilepsy (like Dostoevsky) he sought a cure in Switzerland, where he established peaceful, harmonious relations with the local children. That kind of community became his general model for personal and social relations, a model others in the novel tend to find hopelessly naïve.

In 1888 Nietzsche also read Tolstoy's *My Religion* and took extensive notes. He seems especially impressed by Tolstoy's attempt to free Jesus's original teachings from their later distortions by the church. Tolstoy's Jesus is much like Nietzsche's "idiot" Jesus. He does not teach anything concerning immortality

or a world beyond. His commands are simply these: resist not evil, do not commit adultery or divorce, take no oaths, love your enemy. Tolstoy's Jesus is an "idiot" in so far as he is indifferent to the state, uninterested in progress, and simply encourages a peaceful life in this world. It is a peculiar fact of Nietzsche-reception that the editors of WP deliberately obscured the source of a good number of passages that are simply loose translations or paraphrases of Tolstoy's *My Religion*.[8]

Nietzsche's Jesus, then, could be said to be a compound of Dostoevsky's Myshkin and the late Tolstoy's radically immanentist interpretation. Myshkin's naiveté, illness, and general failure to adapt to the egoism and competitive conventions of society lead to his categorization as an idiot. An "idiot," etymologically considered, lives in his own world (his idiom or idiosyncrasy) rather than the common, larger world. Nietzsche sees Jesus as such a *naif*, preaching love and humility without thought for the morrow. It was the church, led by Paul, that attributed doctrines of reward and punishment to this simple soul.

Among the diverse characters in Myshkin's orbit—driven variously by greed, revenge, passion, and honor—several speak of ultimate religious questions. One of the novel's leitmotifs focuses on Holbein's painting *Christ in the Tomb* (Kristeva 1989). The painting was housed in a Basel museum, so it would be surprising if Nietzsche did not see it. Dostoevsky traveled to Basel expressly to see the image. Jesus's body is stretched out, as if a side of his narrow horizontal tomb had been removed. The body is putrefying; wounds are obvious; greenish tones discolor the flesh. It offers a shocking visual equivalent of the declaration "God is dead" pronounced by GS's madman who gives this graphic description of the dead God: "Do we still hear nothing of the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we still smell nothing of the divine decomposition (*Verwesung*)?—Gods too decompose! God is dead! God remains dead!" (GS 125). Myshkin's antithesis and odd double in *The Idiot* is the violent and ruthless merchant Rogozhin; like others in this feverish world he is obsessed with the question of God's existence. In a visit to Rogozhin, Myshkin sees his excellent copy of *Christ in the Tomb*. Myshkin remarks that he'd seen this unforgettable painting while abroad. Now it becomes the focus of the pair's dialogue on religious belief:

> "But I've long wanted to ask you something, Lev Nikolaich [Myshkin]: do you believe in God or not?" Rogozhin *suddenly* began speaking again, after going several steps.

> "How strangely you ask that and . . . stare!" the Prince observed *involuntarily*.
>
> "But I like looking at that painting," Rogozhin muttered after a silence, as if again forgetting his question.
>
> "At that painting!" the prince *suddenly* cried out, under the impression of an *unexpected* thought. "At that painting! A man could even lose his faith from that painting!"
>
> "Lose it he does," Rogozhin *suddenly* agreed unexpectedly. (Dostoevsky 2003 218 [my emphases])

In this conversation, as frequently throughout *The Idiot*, a great deal is sudden and unexpected.

In the Dostoevskian world of psychic convulsions that Nietzsche found so richly insightful, the threat of sudden atheism is matched by fervid Christian speculation about whether the prophesied end is at hand. The most prominent interpretation of the signs of the times supposedly pointing to the apocalypse is voiced by the drunken, buffoonish Lebedev. He holds forth at one of those crowded, prolonged, intense, and chaotic gatherings, dominated by the sense of acceleration toward an impending but unknown crisis. This autodidact student of the Apocalypse is reputed to believe that Russia's new and growing railway network is a plague threatening the "waters of life" (as in Apocalypse 11:6-7). Lebedev replies that it's not simply the railways as such, but "all this mood of our last few centuries, as a general whole, scientific and practical, is maybe indeed cursed" (Dostoevsky 2003 373). He goes on to explain that the railroads are emblems of a greater acceleration. He refers to "that whole tendency, of which railways may serve as an image, so to speak, an artistic expression. Hurrying, clanging, banging, and speeding, they say, for the happiness of mankind!" (Dostoevsky 2003 375). The acceleration of life endangers its vital waters and indicates that catastrophic change is on the near horizon. In perceiving the colonization of human life by the machine, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, and Marx share a certain common ground.

The Idiot is suffused with trepidation about money and machinery and their speedy transformation of Russian life. Myshkin was especially impressed by the "machine" of the guillotine in Europe. He believes that even legal execution violates the command "do not kill." The guillotine is particularly cruel, he says, despite the claims that its swift efficiency makes it humane. The condemned knows with certainty that the moment of his death is coming, that all possibility of hope is extinguished, and so is thrown into a state of extreme anxiety

(Dostoevsky 2003 22–23). He offers Aglaya, one of the women with whom he'll become emotionally involved, a lengthy description of a guillotine execution. Myshkin imagines that the condemned hears the sound of the falling blade and may even remain conscious for an instant when decapitated (Dostoevsky 2003 63–65). Lebedev, the buffoonish student of Apocalypse, relates another such story about Madame DuBarry (Dostoevsky 2003 197). In Ippolit's description of the grotesque Holbein painting, he explains the battered and corrupt body of Jesus as if it were the remains of a terrible machinic process:

> Nature appears to the viewer of this painting in the shape of some enormous, implacable, and dumb beast, or, to put it more correctly, strange though it is—in the shape of some huge machine of the most modern construction, which has senselessly seized, crushed, and swallowed up, blankly and unfeelingly, a great and priceless being. (Dostoevsky 2003 408)

In Nietzsche's 1888 notes and texts the malignancy of the machine appears in aphorisms relating to German education and to Kant. It is not the termination of biological life that is at stake, but the imposition of a kind of living death, a deadening of impulse and adventurous spirit. An aphorism in TI parodies a doctoral examination:

> "What is the task of all higher education?"—To turn a man into a machine (*Maschine*).—"By what means?"—He has to learn how to feel bored. . . . "Who is the perfect man?"—The civil servant [*Staats-Beamte*]. "Which philosophy provides the best formula for the civil servant?"—Kant's: the civil servant as thing in itself set as judge over the civil servant as appearance. (TI "Skirmishes" 29)

The connection between Kant's philosophy and a living death—or an automated life—is drawn even more tightly in *The Antichrist*. It's as if Dostoevsky's specter of a machine-driven world has expanded to the realms of philosophy and morality, for the categorical imperative is charged with stifling one's own distinctive virtue. The categorical imperative is "*morally dangerous*." We may hear a Dostoevskian echo here: "What destroys more quickly than to work, to think, to feel without inner necessity, without a deep personal choice, without *joy*? as an automaton (*Automat*) of 'duty'? It is virtually a *recipe* for *décadence*, even for idiocy. . .Kant became an idiot" (A 11). Nietzsche goes on to imply that Kant erred egregiously in taking the French Revolution to be a transition from an inorganic form of society to an organic one—in other words, to mistake the dead for the living and the living for the dead. Kant accelerates dehumanization.

Contemporary accelerationists frequently cite Marx's texts on machinery in their attempts to construct a Marxian-Nietzschean analysis of capitalist temporality. The *Grundrisse* claims that in contrast to the traditional instrument skillfully deployed by the worker, the modern machine "possesses skill and strength in place of the worker, is itself the virtuoso, with a soul of its own in the mechanical laws acting through it" (Marx 1994 53). Or "What was the living worker's activity becomes the activity of the machine" (Marx 1994 61). On this reading Marx lays the groundwork for Deleuze and Guattari's machinic analysis of desire. Accelerationists also point out that today's capitalism involves its subjects in a comprehensive mesh of machinic relations, such as the apparatus of financialization with its credit cards, ATMs, and algorithmic calculations that place people with respect to the life-defining parameters of credit and debt. Additionally, we can note the ubiquity of cellphones and computers, along with the expectation that most people will be more or less permanently linked to networks for work, consumption, and news (or propaganda); more algorithms target them in consumer groups on social media.

The Idiot, as Dostoevsky suggests, is meant to display the conflict between a truly good, Christian, and innocent man and contemporary life. He is abused, misunderstood, and insulted in this accelerating world. The novel depicts this destructive acceleration on multiple levels. It begins with a fateful railway journey in which Myshkin, Rogozhin, and Lebedev meet on a speeding train to Petersburg. Rogozhin is a cynical millionaire who gives himself over to his worst impulses, even to murder; Lebedev is a ne'er do well always alert for opportunities to get a bit of money or a boost in status. Very soon the talk turns to money, as the other two craftily attempt to discover whether Myshkin has resources they can tap.

Money is an agency of acceleration in this milieu. As Konstantin Mochulsky observes, in the world of *The Idiot* the pursuit of money or its perverse use generates much of the quickly unfolding action and mood swings (Mochulsky 1967, 352–57). This world is populated by rapacious millionaires, scheming money-grubbers, struggling debtors, and elaborate extortion attempts. Nastasya, the femme fatale, is in danger of being bought and sold but dramatically throws a small fortune into the fire to assert her power over her suitors. Money speeds everything up, eroding traditional values. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, by a universal translation of all relations into monetary ones, capitalism accelerates the decoding of social status and norms. In *Demons,* more coherently composed than its predecessor *The Idiot*, the agencies of acceleration are viral modern

ideas imported from the West and nihilists who are possessed by them, but these agencies require the ground of a rapidly moving capitalism that is shaking off feudal institutions like serfdom.

5 A philosophy about the Antichrist, the Antichrist's own thought, or both?

When Nietzsche first spoke of "a philosophy of the Antichrist" in BGE, he did not yet know Dostoevsky's work. He implied then that the nineteenth century was ripe for such an outrageous task, but that its leading creative and political spirits had either failed to seize the moment or remained oblivious to the opportunity (cf. BGE 274). The penultimate section of *Beyond* (295) is a tribute to Dionysus—another name for Antichrist—and a confession of faith by his "last disciple and initiate" in which Nietzsche anticipates the reader's surprise at hearing that "even gods philosophize." That runs contrary to a venerable philosophical tradition going back at least to Plato's *Symposium*. There *philo-sophia* is said to be the love of wisdom, and our love is always a desire for that which we do not possess. Yet, Plato's gods—or God in mainstream monotheism—are by definition perfectly wise, endowed with universal intellectual intuition. Philosophy would indicate an insufficiency in divine wisdom, more intelligible in a polytheistic context than a monotheistic one. What *Beyond*'s paean to Dionysus/Antichrist suggests is that "a philosophy *of* the Antichrist" is not only about the Antichrist (objective genitive) but also one practiced by the Antichrist (subjective genitive).

What would such a philosophy be? As quest, desire, and activity (to stay with one aspect of the *Symposium*'s account) it would not be a completed system but a series of inquiries, questions, problems, aporias. Perhaps most importantly, it would not be a timeless philosophy, the careful tending of "conceptual mummies" (*Twilight* Reason 1). As I've been suggesting, this means more than being timely in the sense appropriate to its age; philosophy is not merely its age comprehended in thought, the wisdom of Hegel's owl of Minerva that takes flight as the shades of night are falling. It would be a temporalistic philosophy, one that explores the modalities of time itself, its many variations such as speed, acceleration, delay, slowing, rupture, and recurrence. It could be a philosophy for the day after tomorrow. To the extent that traditional philosophy deals with time, Nietzsche says in effect, it either denies it (Parmenides, Plato) or subordinates it to a logical or teleological process (Hegel). Nietzsche's claim

that philosophy, especially German philosophy, has been monopolized by the theologians reminds us that Christian theology is indissolubly wedded to a certain philosophy of history. As Overbeck and other critical scholars had shown, that philosophy of history was generated by a series of falsifications, self-serving speculations, and political programs.

The theological complex of the Antichrist and the *katechon*, claiming a venerable authority from Paul and elaborated by Tertullian, Hippolytus, and others was a crucial component of Christian thought concerning time and history. Although liberal Protestantism had tried to dull the myth's sharper edges, it remained there in "the language of the church" (as Nietzsche writes to von Meysenbug) waiting to be revived. Nietzsche, already contemplating a philosophy of the Antichrist, found "psychological material" for accelerating this accelerationist project in Dostoevsky.

Perhaps the Antichrist theme never suffered serious eclipse in Russia, where Dostoevsky drew upon the tradition.[9] Nietzsche and Dostoevsky employed the Antichrist idea to address what they perceived as the instability of modernity. While the enlightenment tradition had valorized the idea of history as continuous progress toward an improved human condition, albeit vaguely defined, both the Russian and the German saw an accelerated chaotic pace in the wars, industrialization, movements of peoples, and nihilism of their century. Speaking in apocalyptic terms, Nietzsche foresaw new kinds of wars, the collapse of national identities, the growing homogenization of individuals, and the deeply depressing specter of "the last humans." Dostoevsky hoped that such things could be held back by a reinvigorated Russian Orthodoxy; he was in that way an advocate of the restraining force in which Moscow is the third Rome.

The Antichrist figure was Nietzsche's last flamboyant conceptual persona, before he began his rapid metamorphosis of extreme psychic disaggregation into "all the names of history." Before reading Dostoevsky he intimated the possibility of a philosophy of the Antichrist. After reading him he declared in the GM that the Antichrist must be coming:

> This human of the future who will redeem us from the previous ideal as much as from that *which had to grow out of it*, from the great disgust, from the will to nothingness; this bell-stroke of noon and of the great decision, that makes the will free again, that gives back to the earth its goal and to humans their hope; this Antichrist and anti-nihilist; this conqueror of God and nothingness—*he must one day come*. (GM II.24)

As Nietzsche wrote to Brandes, he saw Dostoevsky both as his polar opposite in terms of ultimate orientation, and as an ally in psychological exploration. Nietzsche is the great model for contemporary accelerationism. His philosophy of the Antichrist is an accelerationist philosophy, itself accelerated by his last great discovery of Dostoevsky, an oddly kindred spirit and artist of time.

A final note on the form of *The Antichrist*: The text concludes with the "Decree Against Christianity" signed by "The Antichrist." It reads like a placard posted by an occupying army, forbidding socializing with priests and consigning churches to crumble into ruin as they serve as lairs for noxious beasts. In *Demons* Pyotr Verkhovensky and his crew distribute provocative nihilist pamphlets and declarations around their provincial town to promote anxiety and chaos. They execute their colleague at the site of a buried printing press, an instrument of their campaign of terror. In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche seems to aim at mass effects or at least to mimic them—recall his ambition of a simultaneous publication of a million copies in multiple languages—writing in his most slapdash fashion and appending the outrageous "Decree." It is his version of the propaganda dimension of the nihilists' war.

Notes

I'm grateful to Dan Conway, Paulo Stellino, Petra Carlsson, Rupert Dörflinger, and Robert Oventile for helpful suggestions and provocative questions. I hope to address some of the latter as time and opportunity allow.

1 For discussions of Nietzsche's reading of Dostoevsky in the last two years of his writing life—texts read, chronology, and significance—see Stellino (2015); also Benz (1956: 92–103); Miller (1973) and (1975). The articles in Love and Metzger (2016) explore diverse perspectives on the two. Sommer (2000) provides useful commentaries and references on specific passages.

2 For representative texts of accelerationism and its critics, see Mackay and Avanessian (2017). Noys (2014) offers an informed critical history of the movement and its forerunners, beginning with the Italian Futurists, who themselves frequently invoked Nietzsche.

3 For a general overview of Overbeck's relevant work and further references, see Shapiro (2016: 188–200).

4 For a fuller account, see Shapiro (2016: 166–200).

5 On amortized temporality, see Shapiro (2016: 121–33).

6 As early as 1903, Lev Shestov argued that the "psychological material" that Nietzsche found so impressive in Dostoyevsky was the novelist's ability to portray analogues of his own "regeneration of convictions" in his characters (Shestov 1969). In other words, Dostoevsky was aware of changes and reversals—often abrupt and dramatic—in his own ideas and moods, and depicted similar affective and cognitive movements in his novels. Shestov sees Nietzsche as having undergone comparably intense reorientations (as in his shifting thoughts about Wagner). Both writers, he claims, made art or philosophy out of following and articulating their own psychic metamorphoses. Shestov anticipates in a general way Pierre Klossowski's much more highly articulated conception of Nietzsche as engaged in an experimental attempt to learn from his own "psychological material" (Klossowski 1997).

7 Dostoevsky's acute reader Joseph Frank describes the novel's pace: "The gradually tightening web of the plot, with its accelerating tempo and intricate network of concealed relations, conveys an almost physical sense of this gradual invasion of a long-established order by occult forces surreptitiously overtaking its destiny" (Frank 1995: 477). Translators remark on his depiction of the speed of ideas, writing that the ideas that nourished "the demystifying critiques of modern times . . . came a bit late to Russia, but developed there at an accelerated pace. That acceleration makes itself felt very strongly in *Demons*" (Dostoevsky 1995 xv).

8 I thank Paolo Stellino for reminding me of the importance of Tolstoy in Nietzsche's late portrait of Jesus. The Colli-Montinari edition exposes Nietzsche's intensive interest in Tolstoy's *My Religion* and the efforts of WP's editors to disguise it (Nietzsche 1980 14.754–57). Commentators have puzzled over Nietzsche's late reduction of a planned four-part *Transvaluation of Values* to the single relatively brief book *The Antichrist*. Could it be that, impressed with Tolstoy's book, he envisioned writing its antithesis, in similarly compact form, and addressed to an audience with an appetite for large statements about religion and Christianity?

9 The "Grand Inquisitor" story in *The Brothers Karamazov* is perhaps the greatest modern adaptation of the idea of the Catholic Church as Antichrist. Nietzsche, however, did not know Dostoevsky's last novel.

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